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Short-term missions: what's the long-term impact?

Meagan Gillmore

Everything changed once she got there.

When Jessica Blackett decided to travel to Asamankese, Ghana, she knew she was going to experience another culture. She knew she would see poverty. After all, that's what most people told her about Africa: stories of poverty and dying children. And the buildings she saw in Ghana were broken, made of old wood and metal. But the people were different.

"We're sitting there looking at [the poverty] going, 'It's so sad,'" she remembers. "There's a small part of us going, 'Oh, we feel so

bad about it,' but then we meet the people, I've never met a happier group of people."

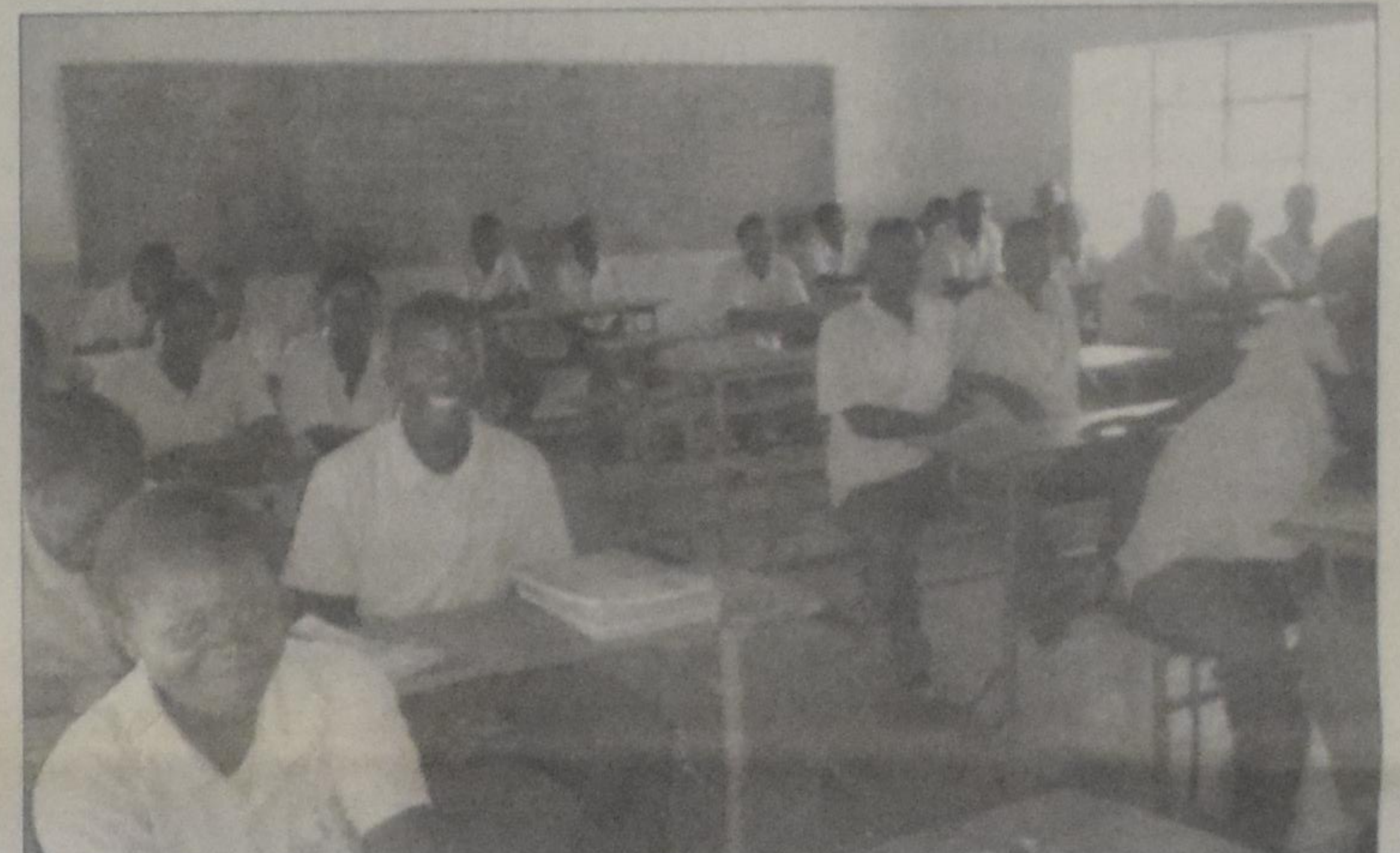
Blackett, along with nine other students from Redeemer University College in Hamilton, Ont., travelled to Ghana last May with EduDeo Ministries, formerly Worldwide Christian Schools – Canada as a member of one of their HANDS teams. HANDS teams, which stands for Helping Another Nation Develop Schools, join with individuals in developing nations to help build Christian schools. Blackett's team continued the work of a previous team. They mixed cement and mortar, and helped paint the walls.

She began preparing early in the school year, when a girl in her dorm told her about a similar trip she'd gone on. Blackett and her team devoted their entire school year to fundraising and preparing for their trip to Ghana. She was there for just over a week.

Almost a year later, she says, she's still learning from the experience and inviting others into similar ones.

Changing times, changing methods

But this model of ministry isn't as simple as boarding a plane and building a school. Originally developed after World War II,



EduDeo Ministries sends mission teams to developing nations to help build Christian schools.

short-term missions have changed dramatically. Evaluating the impact of such trips is, at the very least, difficult. Despite resources for those preparing to lead and participate in these trips and scholarly attention

on the subject, much about the trips remains unknown.

T.V. Thomas, Director of the Centre for Evangelism and World Missions in Regina, notes *See Short-term missions on p. 2*

Youth, young adults and the state of the church

Mike Wagenman

The challenging calling of a campus minister is to stand in the space between the church and the university. It's a space filled with unbearable tension: tension because these two worlds are assumed to be so different; unbearable because it's a space often marked by a deep feeling of homelessness. And yet, it is a place of enormous creative potential. God's people have consistently found the wilderness to be a place where God is encountered anew and where we are formed as God's very own people.

But this feeling of disorientation is not the exclusive experience of campus ministers. In fact, many have pointed out how our contemporary world disconnects us from each other, from the



Jules-Alexis Muenier's painting La leçon de catéchisme (the catechism lesson). Are the formal ministry structures we've relied on for years still effective at communicating the gospel?

Creation, from ourselves, and even from God. Churches are wondering today what their future will look like, given the way things are trending. And many Christians – young and old alike – feel a deep sense of disconnection from home congregations and cultural forms of Christian piety they once knew.

The awkward privilege I have on campus is being given the honour of listening to the stories of many people's joys and disappointments with the church. I'm perceived as a safe person to confess to. I talk daily with those who love their church as well as those who have left church (or faith altogether) for a variety of reasons. Over the past few years, though, the stories of frustration, abuse, and disillusionment have been

increasing. More and more young people feel spiritually homeless.

And we're all frantically asking the question, "Why?" Into the mix of all answers that have been suggested, I'd like to offer another possibility. It seems to me that the current ministries of the church, which took shape about 50 years ago, no longer connect with the North American culture young people are socialized into today. And if the church wants to connect with youth and young adults today, it needs to learn a new institutional language which can communicate the gospel authentically, powerfully, and persuasively.

Let me unpack my observations and what I mean by our church *See State of the church on p. 2*

News

Short-term missions *continued*

that determining how many people participate in these trips and the costs involved are nearly impossible. In his experience, many short-term mission trips are conducted by local churches rather than large mission agencies. Local congregations may not be as keen on keeping statistical records. Charles Cook, Professor of Global Studies and Mission at Ambrose University College and Chair of the Global Missions Roundtable of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, estimates approximately 16,000 to 18,000 Canadians travel on these trips each year. Participants vary across ages.

The uncertainty comes partly from the changing definitions of short-term mission work. A few decades ago, three months, six months or a year were considered short trips. Now, the definition may include anything less than two years. "[Before, it was] never eight days, 10 days," says Thomas. "That's a major shift."

This is not the only shift that's happened. According to Thomas, from the 1960s to the mid-'80s most short-term missionaries were college students or older. Sending teenagers on trips, the exception rather than the rule, first began in the United States. Missions agencies began investing in short-term missions trips in the mid-'70s. These trips, in some ways, became recruitment tools.

And for some, they work. Tim Bootsma, the HANDS Teams Coordinator for EduDeo Ministries, often hears objections to sending high school students overseas. He admits they may not have the most skills or experience. But when it comes to exposing students to the work of the church worldwide, "absolutely it's worth it because the short-term missions trips will be with and will influence these young people's lives." He knows the work he does today stems partly from his own short-term missions experience in college.

Who benefits?

There are other reasons people travel on these trips, and these are more ambiguous. Most participants come from Western nations. Even in the majority world, Thomas notes, it is churches from richer countries, like Singapore, who invest in short-term missions. Perhaps because congregants



When people get to know people and build relationships, real change happens.

The personal nature and benefits of short-term missions work raises questions about the wisdom of investing thousands of dollars in overseas work. Those involved in planning and evaluating short-term missions trips agree that goals need to be clearly defined. When the primary goals are personal discipleship and preparation for local ministry, it may be harder to justify the trips. As Cook points out, numerous opportunities for cross-cultural experiences exist within Canada. Overseas short-term missions trips require an already existing tourism structure to be in place, which means participants may never travel to less-exposed areas of the world. And if they never take an initial trip to such a country, it's less likely they'll do so in other contexts.

Besides, economic disparity between those who go on trips and those they minister to can produce attitudes which may result in the trip causing more harm than good. Bootsma describes it as a "God-complex," an attitude of, "We're Christians, and we're from the developed world, therefore we know what's best for others." Just that attitude will come across to the people that they are going there to help, and just that attitude will reinforce what these communities have felt so often, whether that's through the colonial era, whether that's through their local government," he explains. "Poor communities are often reduced to a statistic. They're overlooked. Their voice is not heard. And few people actually take the time to get to know them."

can afford to travel, short-term missions have become a discipleship tool, a way of igniting a passion for ministry in the lives of those who go. As Cook notes, "A lot of churches are using short-term missions as a way to personalize missions."

When people do get to know people and build relationships, Bootsma argues, real change happens.

Evaluating lasting change

Evaluating the change is difficult, but possible. When Kurt Ver Beek, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Calvin College and director of the college's Semester in Honduras program, began studying the long-term effects of short-term missions on sending agencies, receiving communities and participants, he expected to discover the trips did more harm than good to host communities. He was pleasantly surprised. But he believes the trips are about long-term change for everyone involved. Long-term change in a host community, he says, will happen through the work of local churches and organizations.

For trip participants, the value will be seen after. But it needs to be evident. "It's hard for me to believe that people were changed if you can't see it," Ver Beek says. He echoes concerns of these trips simply being a form of tourism. Participants need to have clear goals of how they will live differently once they return. They need to stay accountable for making those changes.

Blackett's trip to Ghana continues to change her. She and her teammates stay in contact with individuals they met. She's learned to listen to others more and not try to fix all their problems. More than anything, it's left her with a deeper understanding of God's love and a desire for a stronger faith. When comparing her faith with the people she met in Ghana, she concludes, "Every one of us [on the team] kind of came out there basically with more of a fresh new look about who God is and our desire to know him better." ➤

Meagan Gillmore (meagan.gillmore@hotmail.com) travelled to Europe on short-term missions trips in high school. This gave her a foundation for leading Bible studies during university and living in community after graduation. They also made her more intentional about studying Scripture and investing in community – and reflective about how to make disciples of Jesus.

State of the church *continued*

ministries being disconnected from today's youth culture. Let's reflect together on how we currently attempt to engage in discipleship at the congregational level. What comes to mind when we think about our current practice of raising youth and young adults in the faith? Probably Christian day school, youth group/catechism, and profession of faith. These are our formal ministry structures (in church and in partnership with the school) to disciple youth in the faith.

But have you ever reflected on how these ministries are structured? How are they set up to function? If you think about it, the way we do Christian education, youth group/catechism, and profession of faith is very academic. It's like a series of courses we herd children through over the years. It makes sense that our church ministries are like school subjects – we in the Reformed tradition do education well. But think about what we're communicating when we use an educational model for spiritual formation or discipleship. Think about the way a course is set up. The teacher knows ahead of time where he or she wants the students to end up (the end product or outcome) and we construct a system of different stages or steps that work forward step-by-step from the beginning to that future goal we have established. A series of lessons like links in a chain that need to be mastered between now and graduation to make the goal a reality. We want our children to have information in their brains and we assume that this will make them faithful followers of Jesus. This is how faith formation goes. And I see little difference between classes at university and these "classes" at church (or Christian day school).

Curriculum model

I call this the "curriculum model" of faith formation. In this model, we know the end product or outcome we want to produce in the future and everything we do is aimed at getting youth and young adults from wherever they are now to that point in the future. The problem is that a curriculum (Christian or otherwise) can become merely an impersonal mechanical system in order to effectively and efficiently achieve a desired outcome (rooted in an economic worldview). Christian ministry and life rooted in this kind of curriculum framework struggles to be anything other than future-oriented, goal-focused, means-driven. It devolves into a fossilized system that has lost its connection with the cultural or historical context in which it operates. It betrays the very Christian worldview it seeks to impart.

I think something that our kids know about this method (and that is an actual betrayal of what faith formation is really all about) is that it sacrifices listening to our kids in the present in order to have a goal-oriented fixation (or "money-back-guarantee") on the future. In the most extreme forms of this kind of approach, we stop caring about what's going on in the details of our kids' lives today as long as they turn out as responsible and acceptable Christian adults in the future.

Unfortunately, when imported to the church, a curriculum model of youth and young adult ministry is rooted in a progress myth that we'll all arrive on the conveyor-belt of church ministry to a fine, upstanding Christian adult faith commitment. A curriculum model of discipleship is based on a mechanical worldview – that we can somehow control the levers of the universe by doing this here, doing that there.

But it's really dislocated from being attentive to the whole person living in the present.

To add to the problem, much of our orientation in the Christian Reformed Church and in many of our local congregations is rooted in the past (the immigration experience, historical theological battles, etc.) and we have this carry-over curriculum model of Christian formation whose content seems more about the theological battles and documents of the 16th and 17th centuries rather than the questions or struggles of living as Christ's ambassadors in today's culture. The result is often that we present a version of the Christian faith which is more concerned with historically accurate and disconnected-from-life-today biblical or theological tidbits rather than a holistic formation of the heart and Christian desires that are faithfully relevant and responsive to today.

In contrast to what I'm calling a "curriculum model" of faith formation, I would like to pursue an alternative model – a model which is focussed on and rooted in Christ alive in the present, that isn't manipulative or mechanical, that isn't guided by assumed ends and artificial means, that is open and generous to the culture around us while at the same time being rooted and grounded in King Jesus. I'm pursuing a model of faith formation which has its eyes wide open to possibility and change, not just static rote memorization of the status quo. But this is a model of faith formation that will take another edition to fully flesh out. Stay tuned. ➤

Mike Wagenman is the Director of The Kuyper Centre for Emerging Scholars (kuypercentre.ca) at Western University.



Column

From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom



Multiple planets



Recent astronomy findings have suggested that planets are more common than was first apparent. It has been suggested that, in fact, there may be more planets than stars – which are themselves, as we can all appreciate, almost uncountable. Our star has multiple planets, and if this is the case for many stars, then there may be many planets in the universe.

These findings are based on analysis of the NASA space telescope Kepler. This spacecraft, named after the astronomer Johannes Kepler, was specially designed to determine the number and nature of planets found around stars in our area of the Milky Way. The satellite was launched in 2009 and, according to a NASA briefing last December, has identified 2,326 candidate planets, 207 of which appear to be similar to Earth. Based on these findings, it is estimated that about 5.4 percent of all stars may host Earth-like planets.

The findings of this spacecraft have puzzled scientists, because they seem to contradict predictions based on current models of planetary systems. In particular, there appear to be too many larger planets, and they are in the wrong place – too close to the star. These planets have come to be called “super-earths,” and they will require changes in theories of planet formation. This model development is not uncommon in a scientific field based largely on observations, and scientists expect that as observatory instruments become more powerful and produce additional findings, further revisions of theories will prove necessary.

The large number of planets obviously raises questions relevant for all Earthlings, particularly for Christians: are we alone in the universe? Is there life elsewhere in creation, or are we unique, with human beings created in God’s image solely



NASA has discovered more than 2000 new planets in recent years, more than 200 of which appear to be similar to earth.

on Earth? What makes these questions interesting is that we appear to be on the threshold of finding the empirical evidence to answer them. One of the chief tasks of the spaceships sent to Mars and, in future, to Venus is to look for molecules indicative of past or current life. It has also been suggested that life may be found on Saturn’s moon Titan or other moons. If molecules suggestive of life are found in any of these places, it will strengthen the hypothesis that life exists outside the solar system as well. If no evidence of life can be found in our planetary system, then the search will be more difficult and the questions probably not answered in the foreseeable future, given the distance of the nearest stars.

The Catholic Church, through the Vatican’s Pontifical Academy of Science, has been exploring the ramifications of this question both for humans in general and more

particularly for Christians. Father Funes, the director of the Vatican Observatory near Rome, has suggested that intelligent beings created by God could exist in outer space. While he is careful to point out that the official church has not formally addressed this issue, his personal opinion is that intelligent life elsewhere will not contradict belief in God. The Catholic Church as an institution has come a long way from the time of Galileo in facing potential issues raised by science.

The possibility of life elsewhere in the universe need not pose a significant problem for Christians; such life would simply reflect the richness of God’s creative acts. The linked question, whether intelligent or morally aware life forms exist elsewhere in the creation, would have more controversial implications depending on what was discovered. It might require Christians to clarify what we mean by the intervention of the Godhead into our creation in the person of Jesus. How do we view the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God in Jerusalem on the planet Earth about 2,000 years ago?

Fortunately, it is unlikely that we will have to answer this question any time soon. While astronomers may discover evidence of life outside the solar system in the next 50 years, evidence of intelligent life – such as radio-type signals, which are currently being explored with radio telescopes – is more difficult to discern.

Thus, for now at least, we image-bearers can rest peacefully in the knowledge that God so loved this world that his Son came, died, and rose to unite us with him. ➤

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca), who likes to speculate about questions that Christians may face in the future, is a member of the Waterloo CRC and Chair of the Psychology Department at Wilfrid Laurier University.

The deepest place on earth



The specially designed submarine that filmmaker James Cameron used to explore Challenger Deep.

Trevor Quirk, *Christian Science Monitor*

James Cameron, the Canadian director of *Titanic*, *Avatar* and, let’s not forget, *The Abyss*, recently emerged from his 35,756-foot dive to the Challenger Deep.

The Challenger Deep is the lowest point in the Mariana Trench, a gap between tectonic plates that stretches 1,500 miles along the western Pacific, and is thought to be the deepest chasm in all the world’s oceans. At the bottom the pressure reaches over 15,000 pounds per square inch. By comparison, everyday pressure levels hover around 15 pounds per square inch.

How do we know that Challenger Deep is the deepest point on earth? Can we be sure that there isn’t a deeper spot somewhere?

We can’t. Not absolutely. The Challenger Deep was first measured by the HMS Challenger expedition in 1875, a nearly 70,000-mile scientific voyage around the globe that laid the foundations for the modern science of oceanography. To probe the ocean’s depths, the Challenger’s crew used simple lead weights tethered by long ropes. For this purpose, the vessel carried 144 miles of rope. The first reported depth was 26,850 feet.

In 1951, that figure increased to 35,761 feet when another royal vessel, also named the HMS Challenger, re-measured the depth using a primitive form of sonar: a pulse of sound sent deep to bounce off the abyss, then back topside to the researchers awaiting its return. The official depth would change a few more times after, most recently set at 36,070 feet, a figure confirmed with modern sonar techniques.

This number has a margin of error of about 100 feet, so it’s possible that the measured depth of the Challenger Deep could change in the future, or that some other deeper point will be discovered somewhere else. After all, it was only in 1997 that researchers discovered the Sirena Deep, which is also located in the Mariana Trench, which they measured at 35,210 feet, less than a thousand feet shallower than the Challenger Deep.

But it’s probably unlikely that we’ll find a new deepest point in an entirely different part of the world. Bathymetry, the science of underwater topography, has long been using sophisticated sonar equipment to create digital maps of underwater terrain. Sonar beams sent to the ocean floor are updated many times per second, and verified by Global Positioning Satellites. These maps clearly indicate the Mariana Trench as the deepest of its kind, and so far the Challenger Deep is its lowest measured point. Chances are, if the depth or the location of the world’s deepest point ever does change, it won’t be by much. ➤

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Editorials

Of grandmothers and ostriches



May Drost

I carry a childhood memory of my grandmother coming to the farm in early spring to watch as the cows were let out to pasture for the first time after a winter stabled indoors. In my mind's eye, I remember her smiling as the cattle ran, or maybe even kicked up their heels, at being set free to enjoy a banquet of spring grass. Picture it: old lady in a shapeless black dress and little round glasses accompanied by small child enjoying the sunshine. Norman Rockwell might have taken out his artist brushes had he been there to see! And though I acknowledge that I may well have bathed this scene in rose-coloured sentimentality, I'm sure I didn't make it up, and I'm sure it had more significance for my grandmother than could be produced by pretty calendar art. It's fair to ask though: What was special about a few cows being let out of their stalls in springtime and why did watching make an elderly lady so happy?

My grandmother, born in the 19th century, had only a very basic education, except in Scripture. She would have been unaware of such terms as Newtonian physics, clockwork universe, biological determinism, natural selection. The concept of global warming would have been unbelievable to her: God would never let that happen! Though she was no doubt affected by the usual adversities that all humans are heir to (Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward!) her world was more constant and predictable than ours is today. It would not have occurred to her to wonder at what point in the history of planet Earth cows were domesticated, or when our ancestral hunter-gatherers turned to farming. To learn that the major constant in the universe is constant change would have unsettled her.

Today, many Christians are deeply suspicious of and fearful about the things scientists are discovering. Understandable! What are the implications of an ever-expanding universe? What if Adam and Eve were not the first humans, but merely archetypal figures in the story of the Creator's relationship with humanity? To learn that humans share over 90 percent of their genetic material with apes does not help bolster the notion that humans are the keepers of the universe! As new discoveries are made giving rise to new questions, many contemporary Christians are becoming more and more spiritually fidgety, thinking that scientists and other scholars are pulling the rug out from under us, and it has to stop!

Scientific discovery notwithstanding, human nature will win out and there is nothing new under the sun. Copernicus and Galileo paid a big price for their discoveries. Isaac Newton seems to have been unable to bring his scientific discoveries and his mystical understanding of the universe together. Darwin understood what a

sea change his discoveries would make in humanity's perception of the world and its history, and was reluctant to publish his findings. The Christian church, both past and present, has often operated on the premise that "shoot the messenger" is the best way to deal with new information requiring change. This, though understandable, is lamentable nonetheless. It makes me sad to think that scientists and theologians in our own midst like Howard VanTill, John Schneider and Dan Harlow are reprimanded, even vilified for their honest and pioneering scholarship, and are often unsupported by the Christian communities in which they live and work.

We can't go back

We cannot go back to my grandmother's day. The Earth is round, not flat, whether we like it or not. The Earth is not the centre of the universe, much as we would like it to be. Supernovas, dark matter, black holes are real. Many writers on the subject suggest that we may not only be made of dust, but stardust! Stunning fossil records attest to the age of the tiny planet we live on. Researchers are making new discoveries about the human brain almost on a daily basis. All this prods us to ask old questions in new ways. In this regard, time is relentless, but also encouraging. We can't go back, but we can choose to move forward. We can view science and Scripture as mortal enemies, or we can trust in the timeless truths of Scripture to give us the courage to explore the universe with creativity, enthusiasm and joy. What could we possibly discover that would threaten the reality of a transcendent God in love with his creation?



Consider the ostrich: this strange bird seems to suggest that God had fun designing the world.

The book of Job is startling in its emphasis on God's interest in the natural world. Job, having lost everything worth having in life, finally gets an interview with God. Does God tell him, "Poor Job, I feel bad that you're in this predicament, and I'll explain why it had to happen"? Not at all. God presents himself as the undisputed ruler of a seemingly wild and random universe full of fearsome wild beasts and exotic creatures, not to mention storms and other cataclysmic events. Nothing seems orderly or predictable. The ostrich, for example, is depicted as a typical bird brain who hasn't the sense to look after her young properly (Job 39:13-18). Her wings, which she "flaps joyfully" aren't as beautiful as a stork's, but boy, can she run! Dare we say that in spite of his power and majesty God had fun designing the world? Better question: Should we, co-creatures with behemoths and conies, take any less delight in it?

And isn't part of the fun discovering as much as we can about ourselves and our world? Just maybe, the more we discover about the universe, the more we will learn about its Creator. Where is the risk in that? "Nearly everything we know about the supernatural world" says Philip Yancey in *A Skeptic's Guide to Faith* "comes filtered through the ordinary, natural world." I don't know about the theology of this, but I like to think of the world as a sort of conduit through which we can experience God. Just as a painting leads the viewer to see beyond what is explicit in colour and shape, so the physical world testifies to what lies behind and beyond itself.

Back to my grandmother. She may not have known much about science or an ever-changing universe, but she understood what is most needful: that there is an eternal Spring as well as a natural one; that there can be delight in the changing of the seasons and in animals being set free; that the warmth of sunshine sometimes envelops us like a security blanket. Maybe, for the moment, being alive in that place at that time, she was just happy! God can do that for us sometimes. I treasure the memory.

May Drost (mdrost1@cogeco.ca) is a retired teacher of English who lives in Sarnia, Ontario.

Sowing gender confusion in malleable minds



Bert Witvoet

Public schools in the Toronto area have to follow the curriculum set by the Toronto District School Board for its 600 schools. That in itself is not unusual or bad. What should give us cause for concern, however, is the kind of human rights education to which young and impressionable children are exposed. All schools must follow the course prescriptions for Kindergarten through Grade 3 that include the indoctrination called LGBTQ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual/two-spirited, queer issues.

Forced compliance

During their human rights classes, young children are encouraged to question their own gender and sexuality. They are asked to role-play opposite roles – boys play girls and girls play boys. Teachers are asked to read some traditional folk tales and fairy tales with the class and have students write or illustrate their own "gender bending" versions of these tales (Snow White falling in love with Cinderella?). Teachers are instructed to read from *Gloria goes to Gay Pride*. If this storybook is not available, they are to cut out a photo from a newspaper or magazine of the Pride Parade, where all the LGBTQ sexual expressions are celebrated. In addition, these 4- to 9-year-old students are asked to discuss the significance of Toronto's annual Pride Week celebrations. One can guess what kind of opinion is considered acceptable and what kind is deemed unacceptable. Students are then asked to make posters for the Toronto District School Board float and/or school bus that are in the Pride Parade. In addition, students can organize their own Pride Parade in their school. One wonders how much nudity will be allowed to do justice to the theme.

Can a parent seek to have their child excused from these kinds of lessons? The answer is a firm NO. Can teachers be excused from teaching it if their conscience won't allow them? NO. "Teachers are obligated to address all equity issues. Any omissions that maintain a non-inclusive curriculum and pedagogy are considered to foster a poisoned environment" (quoted from the TDSB curriculum guidelines).

Sinister aim

Some understanding soul may argue that the purpose of this curriculum is to break down the walls of suspicion and hostility between those who are straight and those who are not. Surely that must be seen as a noble and generous goal. That may indeed be the case at one level of the issue. Nobody, least of all a Christian, wants to build walls of suspicion and hostility between people. But where the issue becomes oppressive is at a deeper level of spiritual and moral development. Nobody has the right to impose normative expectations on a child without the approval of its parent(s).

This, of course is the conundrum for public education in a pluralistic society. The public school cannot represent the public in spite of its lofty goals as expressed on the Toronto District School Board website – "Our Trustees ... are advocates for education and are the voice of the public, ensuring all concerns are addressed." If you seriously weigh

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Letters

Contract conflicts in Christian schools

Allow me to add four observations to the CC discussion on whether or not Christian school boards across Canada do a good job in hiring and firing teachers (see CC March 26, Feb. 13 and Dec. 12, 2011). As another person who was heavily involved in many of these disputes over the last three decades on the side of the school boards, let me try to add to this complex topic with a positive proposal.

It seems to me that John Tamming is arguing for a new understanding of the role of school boards, namely a proactive one that can set clear and probably new directions for the future of their schools. One of the issues involved would be the quality of instruction. Addressing this requires the power to make more deliberate, quicker and contemporary staffing changes. While John Vriend agrees with the new demands on boards, his proposal to implement more collective agreements would curtail this new direction to manage change, as it does in the public schools now. It's tough to make necessary changes and guarantee job security as well.

John Joosse's discomfort with the new management direction at the OACS high schools stems partly from his commitment to the old consensus model of decision making inherited from the CRC. While his ideal of community togetherness calls for the involvement of all stakeholders in management decisions, this seldom worked, even in the good old days. Where it was tried it merely created widespread angst and recriminations, with everybody

joining gossip factions.

Bert Witvoet's call for ethical decision making is on the mark, but that definition of ethos is too simple by itself. I heard those original Unionville lectures and was not impressed with VonMeyenfeldt's rather utopian view of community. Trust is very important in any workplace, but when the budget continues to bleed red some relationships become more important than others.

It seems to me that the discussion needs to be broadened if we are to arrive at a more biblically sensitive workplace that can handle normal employment disputes ethically. Many of the Christian solutions that I have heard reflect the same one-sided appeal to love and forgiveness as the magic answer to all conflicts. Especially the misreading of Matthew 18 has created false expectations of reinstatement as a required consequence of being ethical.

I strongly believe that this evangelical bias needs to be balanced by a new commitment to the importance of justice as a basic norm for social relationships, especially contractual ones. Perhaps CC can encourage a discussion of basic rights for all the educational parties involved, boards and students too, not just the teachers. Once we appreciate the main dimensions of the problem, then we will achieve a good standard for assessing school board performance.

Adrian Guldemon,
Ancaster, Ont.

Sowing gender confusion *continued*

the validity of such a claim, you realize that it lacks integrity: "The voice of the public?" Who is the public? "Ensuring all concerns are addressed"? What is *that* supposed to mean?

But the most serious objection many will have is that to break down the walls of hostility you have to buy into the worldview of those who consider every possible sexual preference to be a positive expression of self or of love. In Toronto it's educational peace on terms set by Gay Pride ... or graduation based on a contract signed LGBTQ.

Ominous indicators

The harsh irony of this exclusive inclusivity seems to escape the leading lights at the Toronto public school system. The question for other school jurisdictions is how far are we from seeing this kind of curriculum being imposed on all public schools in the country? And how far are we from seeing alternative schools being forbidden to teach their own curricular version of human rights and gender education? In Quebec, for example, all schooling – public, private, home schooling – must teach the ethics and religion course as spelled out by the ministry of education. (Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture program became mandatory for schools in May 2008.) And throughout Canada Christian higher institutions are already feeling the pinch of non-recognition by their secular peers because of the former's view of what constitutes inappropriate sexual behaviour.

So how far are Canadian schools from being squeezed into teaching concepts their teachers and parents reject from out of their faith and worldview? The answer, my friends, is blowing in the blustery winds that emanate from 5050 Yonge Street in Toronto, where Canada's largest school board (and the fourth-largest board in North America), legislates what attitudes toward gender issues 250,000 students need to adopt in their formative years. ➤

Bert Witvoet taught at Harbord Collegiate under the Toronto District School Board for six years in the '70s as well as having been in the Christian school system for 12 years, before he became editor of Calvinist Contact, later known as Christian Courier. He lives in St. Catharines, Ontario, where for 10 years he was editor of the Christian Educators Journal during his retirement.



The Toronto District School Board has instituted mandatory LGBTQ curriculum in its 600 schools.

Comment

Christian schools: a response to Joosse, Vriend and Witvoet

John Tamming

Regarding the issue of Christian school teachers and the pursuit of excellence, I thank John Joosse, John Vriend and Bert Witvoet for engaging – however barely – in this discussion (see CC March 26, Feb. 13 and Dec. 12, 2011).

Our schools are withering. Many have closed altogether. A declining birth rate is a good part of it, but not the entire story by far. People are voting with their feet. I commend boards for not standing on form. I commend them when they finally decide to act on difficult personnel issues to ensure that their schools remain attractive, compelling beacons of educational excellence (again, when staff are let go, it must be done decently and with robust financial compensation).

Vriend assures us that OACS schools offer an education "second to none." If one doubts that bromide, no problem, as Joosse blithely mentions that there are mediocre people in every institution. So, whatever. Not to be outdone, Witvoet invokes covenantal theology. He argues that a board may never break an employment contract (and, indeed, may never replace a contract with another containing lesser protections). For added emphasis, he concludes that "we destroy each other when we act unethically." So, Dear Board, unless you have a serious disciplinary issue that triggers mediation/arbitration (and the merely incompetent or hapless will never hit that threshold), seniority rules and there is not a thing you can do about it.

None of these responses are adequate to the crisis facing our schools. If we are to ask families to pony up north of \$22,000 per year to support kids in both elementary and secondary, schools have a covenantal obligation (right back at you, Bert) to ensure that all staff are dedicated and competent Christian professionals. Covenants are two way streets, after all, as even a cursory reading of Deuteronomy suggests.

These three writers are suspicious of my use of the word excellence. Why? I wrote that in my personal and professional experience over the last 20 years, many administrators do a very poor job of supervising teachers and school boards too often show compassion for the teacher rather than compassion for

those generations of students who are forced to endure incompetence and (yes) sloth.

I suggested that every three years a board ask of a teacher (through professional evaluations, including student and parental feedback): Is she competent to teach or is the calculus just not sticking with the pupils? Is he passionate about his craft or is he mailing it in with 10 year-old notes? Does he have what it takes to help mould young citizens of the kingdom, or does he think that having a "kingdom vision," a membership in ICS and a volume of Ridderbos on the shelf is sufficient?

Joosse dismisses this as applying secular business values to Christian schools. Say what? My critics might know of callous boards that have, for the sake of a \$15,000 salary spread, fired outstanding, committed and imaginative teachers who were loved by students and parents alike. I don't know of any such board actions. The terminated teacher might comfort himself with the thought that money drove the decision but that does not make it so.

In my experience, it is the teacher or administrator who has mailed it in for years – and who, as such, has consistently broken covenant – well before things finally come to a crisis point. The termination is simply a formal acknowledgement that promises to the school (to be competent and interested in your craft) have been broken for a very long time.

I admit that I do not care for seniority in general, and I particularly object to such when it comes to our Christian institutions. Appeals to theological language (whether compassion or covenant or the idea of ordination) can be, as with patriotism, a last and flimsy refuge. In our churches, we allow melancholic pastors to drag down the faith of our teens for a decade – and we wonder why the youth are straying. In our schools, we reason that "oh, he's not that bad," and allow this to be the standard for some of our teachers. And we wonder why over half our parents don't bother sending their kids to Christian schools.

I note that my three interlocutors are all former long time teachers within OACS schools. I get who speaks for the teachers. All I want to know is who speaks for the kids?

John A. Tamming is a barrister and solicitor in Owen Sound, Ont.

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News

Contemporary group's 'fresh singing' of old hymns touches hearts



PALOS HEIGHTS, Illinois (BGMI) – “Under the Radar,” a radio music-ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, normally aims its music at an audience 25 to 45 years old. But recently it sponsored a 10-day tour presenting a blend of remade, classic hymns and contemporary hymns aimed at seniors in nursing homes. Even in “remade form,” the hymns deeply touched their elderly audiences, said observers.

Under the Radar is comprised of three Nashville musicians: singers/songwriters Andrew Greer and Julie Lee, and keyboard/guitar-player Kyle Buchanan. The group is a part of Reframed Ministries, the English-language outreach for the CRC’s electronic media ministry Back to God Ministries International. In its radio program, the three-person group Under the Radar features well-crafted songs by under-appreciated Christian artists (see RadarRadio.net).

Dave Trout, host and producer of Under the Radar, also sponsored the tour. “We know that hymns transcend time and generations,” he said. “We knew this hymn-based tour would provide a great opportunity to bless an older generation. Not only did we see toes tapping and folks singing along, but it helped all of us ... to reflect on the timeless truths in the songs.”

Barb Van Milligan, coordinator of Life Enrichment at the Holland Home in the Chicago area, noted that hymns can be a living symbol of God’s grace. “It runs the full gamut. For instance, my mother-in-law has dementia,” said Van Milligan.

Australia: Famous cardinal, famous atheist debate each other

SYDNEY, Australia (CWN) – A recent televised debate between well-known Roman Catholic cardinal George Pell of Sydney and the crusading British atheist Richard Dawkins drew headline coverage in Australia, but left viewers split on the merits of the argument.

While the *Sydney Morning Herald* called the event “one hell of a debate,” Michael Cook of MercatorNet found the exchange unsatisfying because Dawkins backed away from a strictly atheistic stand and offered no guidance at all regarding the meaning of life in a godless universe. Cook concluded that Dawkins is “a gifted demagogue but he is a

“She can’t remember what she had for lunch. But as I watched her during the program she sang every word of every hymn – words that stay with us until the very end. Anyone who can refresh those memories is always welcome here.”

Looking towards the incorruptible

At each event, Andrew Greer read from 2 Corinthians 5. The passage, he said, discusses how “when these bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away,” they will be replaced by God-made resurrection bodies “and we’ll never have to relocate our tents again.”

Sharon Nelson, a volunteer at one of the nursing homes, River Oaks Garden, said she watched with satisfaction and happiness as several dozen senior citizens sang along to the 1914 James C. Moore hymn “Where We’ll Never Grow Old.”

While the goal was to serve and reach out to these different senior communities, the musicians and Under the Radar staff were also blessed by participating in the tour, they said. “Residents of retirement homes have lived through many of the tragic scenarios that moved hymn writers to pen the great songs of our faith,” Andrew Greer said. “And so as younger folk, we learn a great deal from their perspectives on life and the way their faith has been sustained in spite of their current circumstances.”

Julie Lee said that even though she performs often before various audiences, playing for “the senior communities was, for me personally, the most meaningful experience I have had both spiritually and musically in a long time.”

Dave Trout concluded, “The entire tour was a glowing success. But, especially, it was a rare treat for us to partner in a unique way with our oldest generation. It reminded me of Proverbs 11, which says, ‘Those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.’”

mediocre philosopher.”

Dawkins was also in the U.S. recently and drew criticism from Christians there because he had told fellow atheists to openly ridicule those with whom they disagree, aimed primarily at Christians.

Cardinal Pell is known for being a kind of evangelical Catholic and outspoken about ethical and social issues.



Dawkins (left) and Pell.

Alberta: Going into election, Premier opposes conscience rights of doctors

CALGARY, (LifeSiteNews.com) – Alberta Premier Alison Redford says she is “frightened” by her political rival’s support for conscience rights. Redford has argued that doctors should be forced to conduct abortions and prescribe contraception, even if it goes against their beliefs.

Redford, leader of the Alberta’s PCs, jumped on the issue early this month as polls consistently showed that she trailed Danielle Smith of the Wildrose Party in the run-up to the province’s election, to be held on the date of this CC issue (April 23). But whatever the outcome of the election, no one expects this issue to simply disappear.

Smith told the Rocky Mountain Civil Liberties Association in August of last year that her party “will ensure conscience rights for marriage commissioners and health professionals.” A Wildrose policy passed in 2011 says the party believes the government should “implement legislation protecting the ‘conscience rights’ of health-care professionals.”

But Redford believes doctors should be required to do abortions and prescribe contraception to make sure that “all of the unique families in this province have the opportunity to know that when they’re accessing services, they can trust those services can be provided.” She added, “When people take on professional responsibilities, I expect them to be able to meet

those professional responsibilities.” Redford wanted the issue to be a “critical discussion point in the election.”

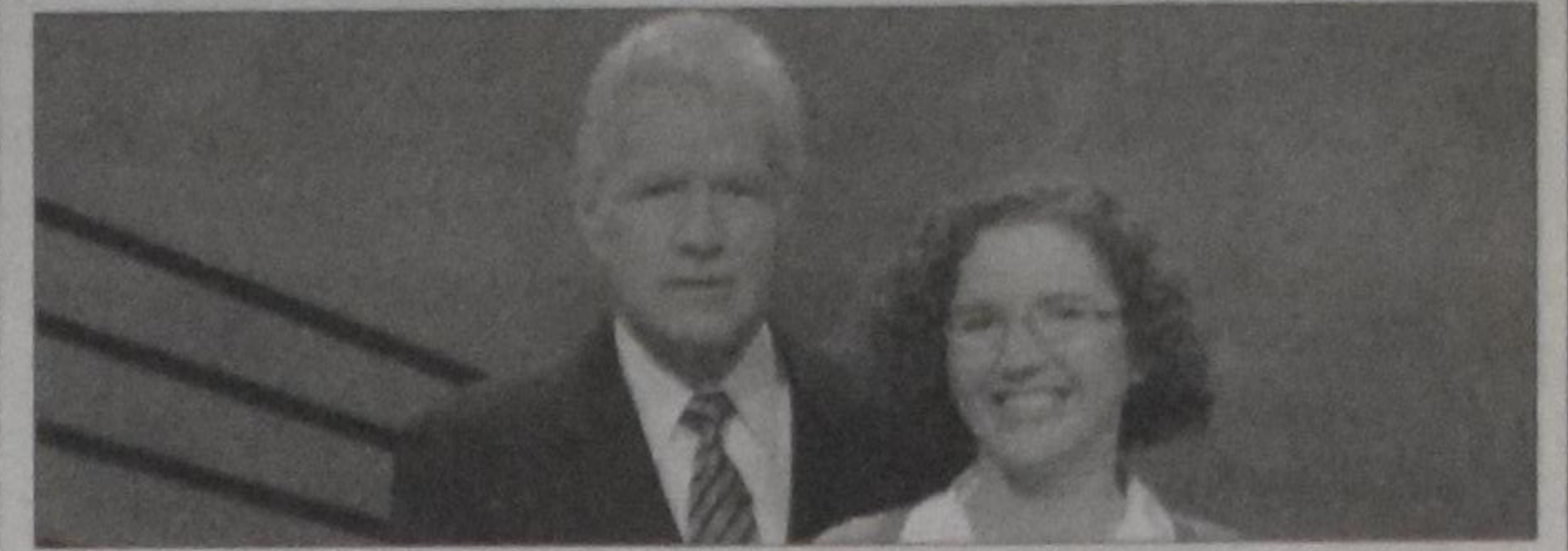
Her stance, she said, was in favour of “diversity.” She went on, “I certainly respect people’s personal beliefs, but I believe in a province where we have to treat individuals with dignity and respect. We have to live in a community where we respect diversity and we understand that everyone feels safe and included.”

No ‘moral diversity’

Redford’s views were slammed by a former member of the PC caucus, Julius Yankowsky, who represented the Edmonton Beverly-Clareview riding from 1993-2004 under Premier Ralph Klein. “If the Premier really believes in respecting diversity, she would allow for diverse moral opinions,” said Yankowsky, who now coordinates Campaign Life Coalition Alberta. “But no. Look at what’s happening in the States with Obama. No, Christians and especially Catholics are totally under attack.” Here in Alberta, too, Yankowsky asserted, the government is “going to do whatever they need to to try and make it very, very difficult for us.”

Yankowsky had put a bill forward in the late 1990s to secure conscience rights but it ultimately died on the order paper.

Calvin College grad wins Jeopardy



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA/CalvinCollege) – Cathy Guiles, a 2003 graduate of Calvin College’s English department recently competed on the long-running television game show *Jeopardy*. She taped three episodes of the show which aired on three consecutive evenings near the end of last month.

The show pits three contestants against each other and requires extensive knowledge on a wide range of subjects. Information is presented in the form of answers and contestants must then ask the implied question (e.g., Answer: “The Great Lake bordering both New York and Ontario.” Question: “What is Lake Ontario?”)

The answers/questions are displayed behind dollar-amounts on a grid of five squares up and down (with amounts from \$100 to \$500) and six squares across, representing information in six different subject areas. The answers/question become more difficult as the dollar amount rises. In order to be allowed to answer, one contestant must beat the other two by being first to press a hand-held buzzer – and of course must state the correct information.

Guiles says she had wanted to be on *Jeopardy* ever since she was a teenager. In fact, she tried out for Teen *Jeopardy* at the time. She didn’t make it, but “I kept trying and trying,” she says. She says she would watch the show with her family and friends and she “got a lot of questions that they didn’t get. I was always good at trivia. On *Jeopardy*, they hide a lot of hints in the clues, and I was always good at figuring them out.”

While a Calvin College student, Guiles worked as a reporter for the *Chimes*, the student newspaper. When she graduated she pledged in its pages to one day appear on the show. She went on to earn a master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University near Chicago and now works as a copy editor for the Washington, D.C., company Smart Brief.

Guiles explains that *Jeopardy* holds an online test, on which she did very well. Then she went into New York City (she lived nearby) to try out in person and won a place on the show. She thinks her English major helped her, as did her entire liberal arts education at Calvin.

At least one or two answer-question pairs on each show relate to Canada because *Jeopardy*’s popular host, Alex Trebek, grew up in Canada. Guiles appreciated Trebek. “He’s really nice,” she said. But “the only time you get to talk to him is during the contestant interviews and while you’re playing the game. He’s really friendly. You can tell he’s been doing this a while because he’s really professional. And really funny too.”

Despite Smith’s previous stance, media outlets reported that the Wildrose leader avoided direct questions about her views on whether a marriage commissioner could refuse to conduct a same-sex “marriage” or a doctor could refuse to do an abortion. Instead she said, her party hopes to set up a Human Rights Division in the provincial court to handle complaints that arise in such scenarios. The division would replace the existing Alberta Human Rights Commission.

“We want to set up a separate division of the provincial court to deal with these exact kind of complaints, so that real courts and real lawyers with real rules of evidence would be able to decide them,” Smith said. “I support the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and when you look at it there is freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of association – all of these freedoms under our charter need to be balanced in society against competing rights and freedoms,” Smith told the *Edmonton Journal*.

News

Chuck Colson still critical after brain surgery for blood clot

Marian Van Til, with files from CCCW

LANSDOWNE, Va. – At CC's press time, Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship and the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, continued to take "slow but encouraging steps toward recovery following surgery on Saturday, March 31" after collapsing during a speaking engagement, said spokespeople for Colson. Colson was rushed to a nearby hospital and submitted to the surgery, which removed a pool of clotted blood on the surface of his brain.

Colson is one of the U.S.'s best-known converts to Christianity after having taken part in the Nixon-era Watergate law-breaking. He was then, by his own admission, a nasty, self-centered man. He worked for U.S. President Richard Nixon from 1969-73 and was one of the "Watergate Seven." He pleaded guilty to obstructing justice and was sent to prison. Seven months into his one-to-three-year sentence Christ took hold of him and radically changed his life. His time in prison made an indelible impression. He could not forget the other inmates he encountered and he founded Prison Fellowship (PF) a few years later in 1976.

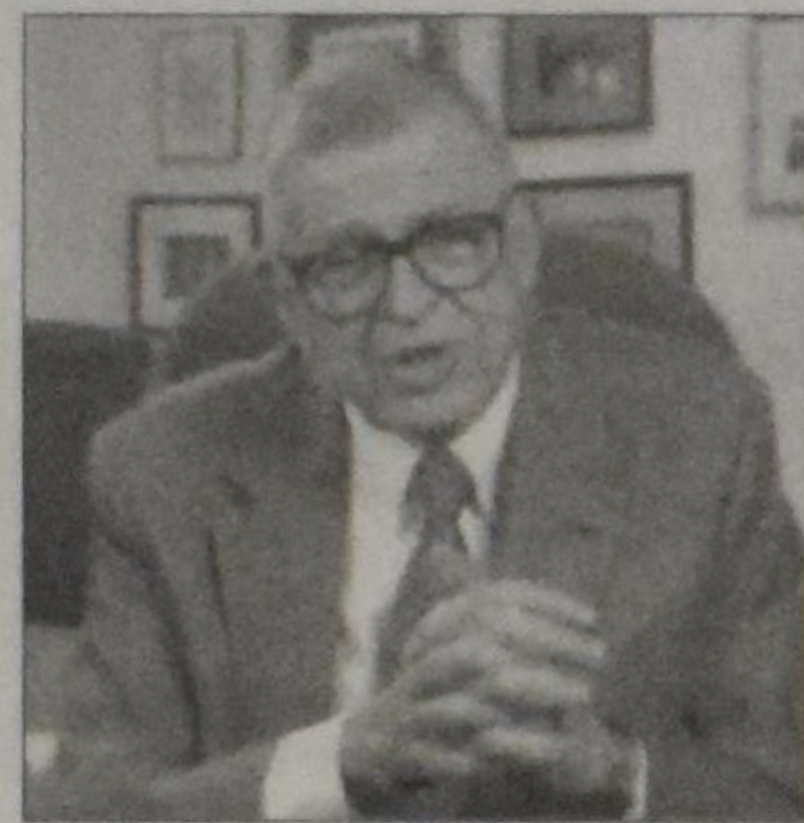
Over the years, Prison Fellowship has become a model for effective Christian prison ministries. Inside prisons, "volunteers and staff share the Gospel, disciple and mentor prisoners, and help them develop the life skills, social skills and parenting skills that will increase their chances of success on the outside," says the group. In addition, "through collaboration with other Christian ministries, Prison Fellowship's Operation Starting Line (OSL) facilitates prison events. These involve musicians, performers and speakers who share the hope of Christ. Volunteers mingle with prisoners, praying with them and offering encouragement."

Reformed influence

Over the Easter weekend, a week after his collapse and surgery, Colson hit some important health milestones regarding his hoped-for recovery. He was awake for several hours on that Saturday, was taken off his ventilator and

was able to speak for brief periods. Nevertheless, at the latest update before press time (April 11), Colson remained in critical condition. Prison Fellowship CEO Jim Liske reminded all those concerned for Colson and his family that "in situations like this, bad things happen fast and good things happen slowly," and encouraged them to remain diligent in prayer over the weeks to come.

This was the first time in 34 years that Colson did not spend Resurrection Sunday in prison, sharing about the Good News of the risen Christ with inmates. But Prison Fellowship staff and volunteers took his place, celebrating Easter with two days of in-prison outreaches in New York and California under the leadership of CEO Liske and PF President Garland Hunt. Approximately 100 inmates responded to the gospel presentations by indicating their desire to give their lives to Christ. Nine more were baptized, said PF. Dozens of inmates at Sing Sing also planned to send get well cards to Colson.



Colson has received 15 honorary doctorates and in 1993 was awarded the Templeton Prize, the world's largest annual religion award (over \$1 million US), given to a person who "has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension." Colson donated this prize to further the work of Prison

Fellowship, as he does all speaking fees and royalties.

Colson is a prolific reader and author. He has said he has been strongly influenced by Reformed theology, including works of Herman Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper. His emphasis on the importance of a Christian worldview evidences that, as does his own popular apologetics entitled *The Faith: What Christians Believe, Why They Believe It, and Why It Matters* (2008). His latest book (2011) is *The Sky Is Not Falling: Living Fearlessly in These Turbulent Times*. ➤

Study shows one-quarter of CRCs using 'innovative' worship styles

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – The Christian Reformed Church rates among the top Christian faith groups whose congregations say they offer their members "innovative and contemporary" styles of worship, according to the recently released Faith Communities Today (FACT) study. Although it is too soon to tell, churches in these denominations and faith groups may be on the growing edge of "creating a new style of worship among Protestant groups," asserted Marjorie H. Royle, author of the study.

The survey reports that 51 percent of Assemblies of God churches, 46 percent of historically black denominations, 34 percent of non-denominational churches and 25 percent of Christian Reformed congregations report that they use "innovative and creative worship styles."

Worship in these churches, said Royle, plays down the role of the leader or pastor. Sermons often come in the form of stories or informal group discussions. These churches may make use of traditional candles and incense at the same time they play popular music instead of singing hymns. "Exactly what this style will look like will become more dominant as these new churches emerge within their denominations and become more mainstream," said Royle.

The FACT report is one in a series produced by The Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership, based on a 2010 survey that analyzed responses from 11,077 randomly sampled congregations of all faith traditions in the United States.

Ben Becksvoort, director of the Great Lakes Region for Christian Reformed Home Missions, helped with the report on worship. He says that Christian Reformed Home

Missions is currently supporting several new churches that could fit into the category of "emerging churches."

Combining ancient and modern

Royle said such churches are experimenting with combining ancient liturgies and practices of the church with liturgies and practices that are common today. This approach, the study shows, has a very practical effect. "Churches that are more innovative and open to change are more likely to be growing." She also believes that "young adults like this style of worship."

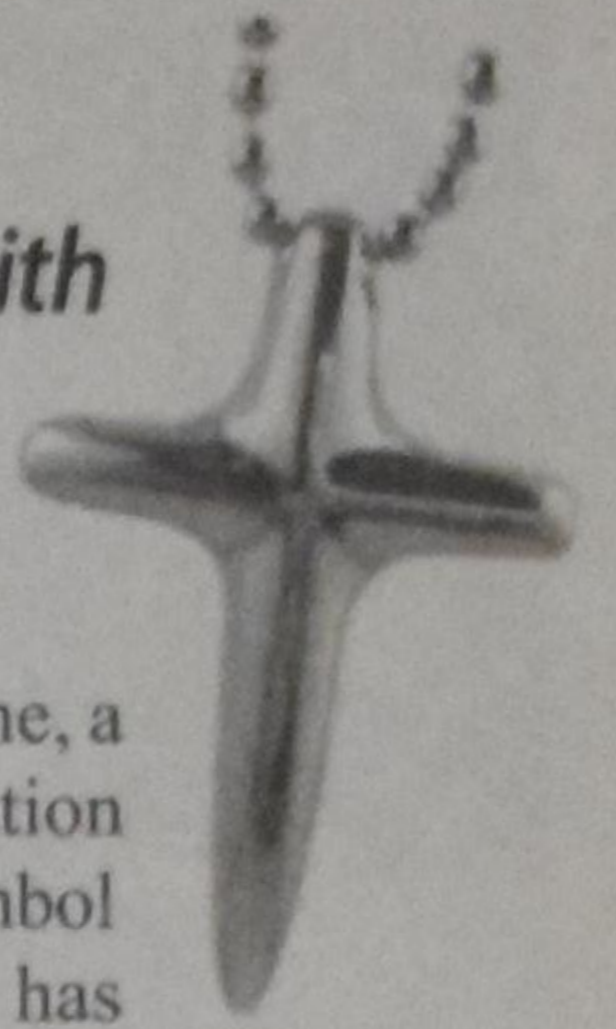
In a press conference, she said it is clear that the "main focus and experience of worship remains" in these churches, no matter what type of worship a church uses. "Although the churches reported to us great varieties in forms of worship, they said that their worship is still filled with God's presence."

The study says churches tend to define contemporary worship as worship that includes the use of guitars and drums for music, projecting videos and other materials on screens, frequency of offering the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, and the role of the pastor in the life of the church.

Overall, the survey found quite a bit of change in worship styles in just one decade, between 2000-2010. In addition, it found that 42 percent of congregational leaders said there had been conflict in their churches over worship style. Although almost 30 percent of congregational leaders interpreted the conflict as "not serious," they still reported members leaving their church as the result of the conflict.

One of the results that "blew me away," said Royle, was the vast range of languages – some 66 – that are now spoken in

Britain: Following ban, Scottish cardinal tells flock: wear a cross, proclaim your faith



EDINBURGH, Scotland (CWN) – After a court recently told Britons that wearing crosses in public offends non-Christians and, therefore, must not be done, a Scottish cardinal told his Easter congregation they should wear a cross *every day* as a symbol of their beliefs. Cardinal Keith O'Brien has also called on all Christians to make the cross "more prominent in their lives."

During his Easter Sunday sermon at St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh, Cardinal O'Brien told his flock to "wear proudly a symbol of the cross of Christ on their garments each and every day of their lives."

He said, "I know that many of you do wear such a cross of Christ, not in any ostentatious way, not in a way that might harm you at your work or recreation, but a simple indication that you value the role of Jesus Christ in the history of the world, that you are trying to live by Christ's standards in your own daily life."

Cross-wearing became an issue after two women were barred by their employers from wearing crosses to work. A British court sided with the employer but the women are now hoping that their cases will be heard at the European Court of Human Rights. Nadia Eweida, 59, of Twickenham (south London) was suspended by British Airways for breaching BA's uniform code in 2006. Shirley Chaplin, 56, from Exeter, was barred from working in hospital wards by Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Trust after refusing to hide the cross she wore on a necklace chain.

Show the cross's centrality

During his sermon Cardinal O'Brien quoted Pope Benedict, who said Christians "need to be free to act in accordance with their own principles."

O'Brien continued, "I hope that increasing numbers of Christians adopt the practice of wearing a cross in a simple and discreet way as a symbol of their beliefs. Easter provides the ideal time to remind ourselves of the centrality of the cross in our Christian faith. A simple lapel cross pin costs around £1. Since this is less than a chocolate Easter egg, I hope many people will consider giving some as gifts and wearing them with pride."

When asked for a response, a Scottish government spokesperson said, "Wearing a religious symbol is entirely a matter for individual members of staff. We have no policy as an employer." A Scottish parliamentary spokesperson said, "The Scottish Parliament does not have a specific policy for staff displaying religious symbols in their work attire."

NHS (National Health Service) Scotland is advising individual health boards to "conduct a full risk assessment" to ensure that their local dress code policy "is appropriate for different categories of staff and should look to support staff in complying with both the needs of the service and any religious or cultural requirements." ➤

churches. "Clearly, the number of ethnically diverse churches is growing. We see many more languages spoken in 2010 than 10 years before," she said.

Some other findings of the study:

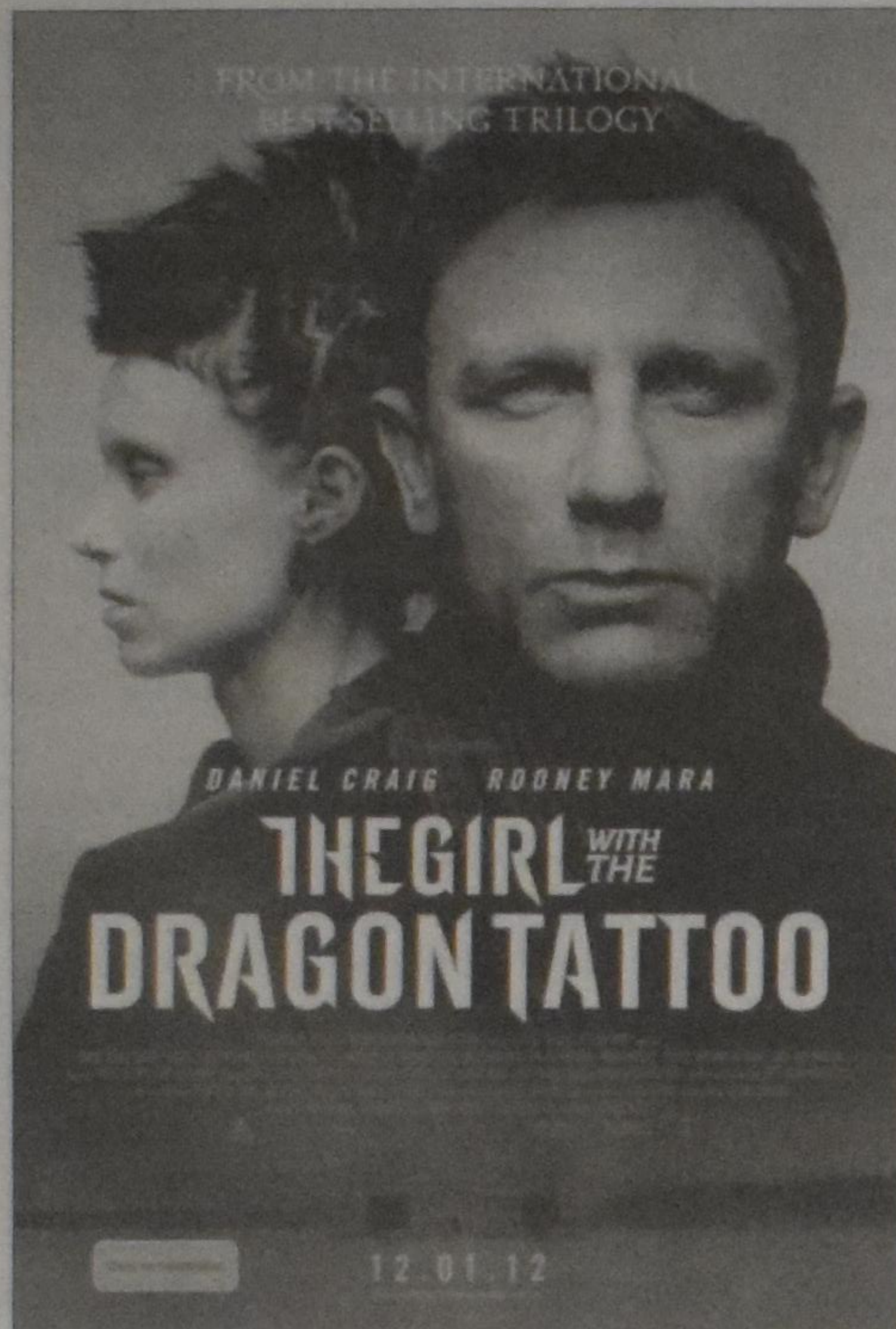
- Decreasing average attendance at worship. Since 2000, the median size of the congregation decreased in every Christian denomination group.

- Sunday morning remains the most common worship time.

- Change continues to occur slowly. When asked how much they had changed in the last five years, nearly half of all congregations said they had not changed at all. ➤

Reviews

Book's adaptation thrills, yet difficult to watch

**The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo**

directed by David Fincher

based on the best-selling novel by Stieg Larsson
Columbia Pictures, 2011**Brett Alan Dewing**

David Fincher doesn't make crap. He also doesn't make fluff. Neither is anywhere to be found in *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*. It is an excellent thriller full of very hard to watch violence and depravity delivering a full catharsis by the end credits (and leaving me to wonder what the other two books are about ... there seem to be few loose ends).

The original title of Stieg Larsson's book was *Men Who Hate Women*, and it's a title I find much more intriguing, apt and compelling. This is indeed the story of men who hate women. And I can't help thinking some of that hatred and some of those men could have been left out or dealt with more discreetly. But, hey, this is Fincher, and you get what you expect from the director of *Fight Club* and *Se7en*.

At its core, the film is a classic serial killer movie. And though I found the culprit way too easy to identify, it delivers enough twists, turns and killer suspense to be more than interesting. It's ironic that after writing about the lack of action in a film like *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, I would be writing about another film that features late nights at the library and endless file boxes. It's refreshing to see detective work done in a realistically ponderous way, but the staging and score of *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* make it exhilarating as well, where *Tinker Tailor* became in itself ponderous.

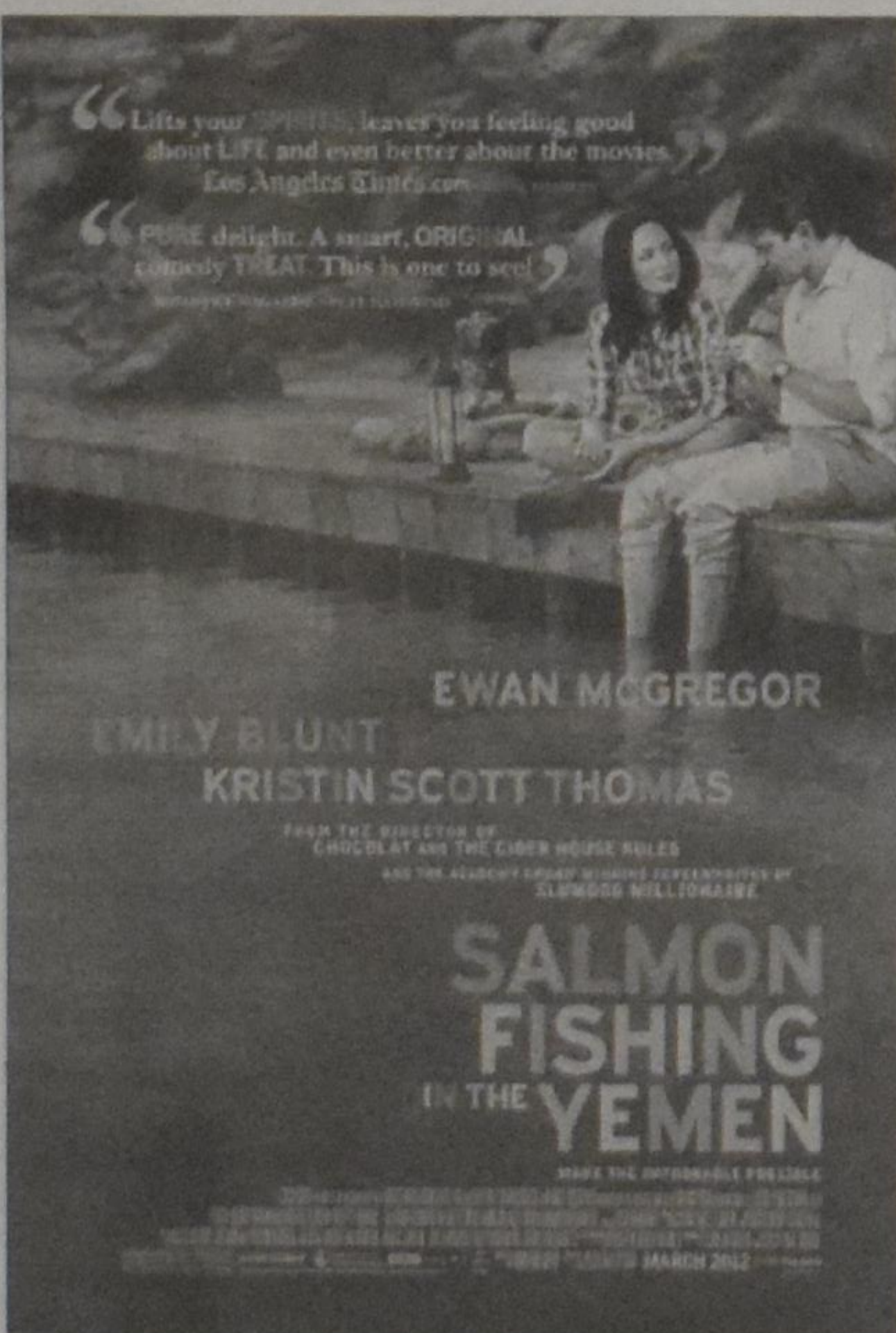
I've heard many announce Lisbeth Salander (the title girl and dragon) as the 21st century heroine and feminine role model. I sincerely hope this isn't so, as Ms. Salander is more than a little mad and is capable of great degradation and violence herself. This is no one to look up to. This is someone to be pitied, even as she works with Daniel Craig's Mikael, being used and abused by his passivity toward her as much as the violence of her other tormentors.

Dragon Tattoo is a great yarn, but I highly recommend it in edited form. If a television or airplane version is available someday, go with that. The original has so much (indeed, in my eyes, gratuitous) nudity and violence that it makes the audience just one more entity using and objectifying Lisbeth while becoming desensitized to the violence that she fights. Because she is active with men and women, we're meant to see her as sexually liberated, but the way the camera leers at that activity makes her yet another slave, not a breathing dragon but a curiosity piece written in ink and pain – in short, a dragon tattoo.

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10,000 North Atlantic salmon and the question of love

**Salmon Fishing in Yemen**directed by Lasse Hallström
Lionsgate, 2011**Nick Schuurman**

"Movies," writes Carl Plantinga in his book *Moving Viewers*, "often appeal to viewers not because they reflect experience, but because they idealize and exaggerate it." That, I believe is precisely the case with *Salmon Fishing in Yemen*.

Set in Britain, the film follows the absurd and fantastical vision of an incredibly wealthy Yemenese sheik to – you guessed it – fish for salmon in Yemen. Through an unlikely series of events, Sheik Muhammed, played by Amr Waked, becomes connected with Dr. Alfred Jones (Ewan McGregor), Britain's leading fisheries expert. Initially introduced by public relations consultant Harriet Chetwode-Talbot (Emily Blunt), the two, along with Chetwode-Talbot, are then approached by Patricia Maxwell, press officer for the British Prime Minister. Desperate for a feel-good headline to distract the public from the ongoing bloodshed in Afghanistan, Maxwell stumbles across a memo regarding the idea (which, up until this point remained nothing more than a dream and a plan on paper), and sets the whole project into motion. An enormous dam,

complex irrigation system and shipment of some 10,000 North Atlantic Salmon are just a few of the seemingly impossible steps that need to take place.

The entire "salmon fishing in Yemen" plot is, in effect, secondary to what the movie is really about – a predictable (albeit adequately translated into the 21st century) story of romance between P.R. sweetheart Chetwode-Talbot and bookish Dr. Jones. Should she, her boyfriend of three weeks reported missing in action during a tour of duty, now look instead to the film's protagonist? Should he, bored and unhappily married, leave his wife in turn for her? That tension and those questions, I think, are part of what

allows people to connect to the film, and other films like it. Because, if most movie-goers are honest with themselves, they have entertained similar doubts (Should I stay? Am I making the right decision? What if something happens to one of us?). Strip away the whole desert fish pond bit, and you are left with some of the most basic questions about what it means to be human, to love, and to be loved.



impossible really can happen. Dr. Jones, on the other hand, serves as the voice of reason. Convinced by data and driven by logic, he continually doubts that the project could ever be successful. Again, there is something deeper going on here. To return to Plantinga's thought, maybe we watch films like *Salmon Fishing in Yemen*, with all their clichés and predictably awful dialogue, not because life is actually like that or we actually talk the way script-writers write, but because there is something about the questions they deal with that is true to the human condition, reflecting (in a distorted, out-of-proportion, circus tent mirror kind of way) some of our most basic hopes, desires and aspirations.

If you are expecting something beyond this movie's title, don't get your hopes up. That said, it delivers what it promises.

Nick Schuurman (reviews@christiancourier.ca) is CC's reviews editor.



Feature

Dutch immigrant history and the *Christian Courier*

Harry Boonstra

The following is the second instalment of a two-part essay on the *Christian Courier* and its precursors. The first instalment ran in the April 9 issue of CC.

The founding of churches was of paramount importance. Since most of the readers of the *Christian Courier*'s precursor newspapers (*Contact* and *Canadian Calvinist* – which later united to become the *Calvinist Contact*) came from various Reformed churches in The Netherlands, they wanted and needed similar congregations. Since editor P.D.K. was an American Christian Reformed minister, he assumed from the beginning that the new immigrants would join or start CRC congregations. An immediate question he addressed was the national nature of these churches. Should they just be gathered under the U.S. umbrella, or form a separate Canadian classis? He soon concluded that a Canadian classis was essential, because of “the distinctiveness of our Canadian constituency. Canadian problems can be solved most naturally and intelligently by a Canadian ecclesiastical assembly” (9/1945). (See Tymen Hofman's *The Canadian Story of the CRC* for an indispensable source on this subject.)



Back to the “various Reformed churches”: Although the Dutch “state church” (*De Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*) was the principal Reformed denomination, various other denominations (usually more conservative) had also been spawned. P.D.K. and others assumed (or at least hoped) that folks would leave their theological squabbles behind and all join the CRC. Some did. One congregation (Aylmer) counted members from five different Dutch churches (3/1951). But a United Reformed church was not to be. The largest group that did not join the CRC founded the Canadian Reformed Churches.

A major issue for the CRC was where to find *dominees* for all these congregations. The early response was to send U.S. ministers to Canada as Home Missionaries – mainly to help start new congregations. In my family Rev. Adam Persenaire is still remembered as a Protestant saint. He and some 25 other pastors performed wonderful service – organizing congregations, as well as taking members to the hospital or finding jobs, serving as interpreters and baptizing a large flock of babies from the prolific families. Other U.S. ministers came to serve regular pastorates (I fondly recall the ministry of Rev. T.C. Van Kooten in Hamilton). These “American” preachers at times needed some help with their Dutch language services, but they were a great

support to the immigrants in crossing the bridge from old to new country.

But the congregations increased at such a rapid pace that many operated without their “own minister” for a long time. Older readers will remember the frequent reading of sermons by a (usually nervous) elder. The U.S. supply of preachers was limited – even from among new candidates. “In the class that will be graduated from Calvin Seminary this year, there is not one who can speak Dutch” (5/51).

Dutch pastors

One solution urged by some was the calling of pastors from The Netherlands. Rev. John Gritter wrote a vigorous article against this solution in the *Contact*. These ministers “may have had some English lessons and can read English. But to write and read English as used in Canada and to preach in it is something else. This is usually not edifying. The result is that some preachers are satisfied with this and never learn it better. And the young people who are learning proper English are disdainful and lose respect for the minister and his sermons.” Besides, since they would be newcomers themselves, they would not be able to provide leadership in fitting into Canadian society (3/1951).

Of course, Gritter's article did not keep congregations from extending calls to Dutch ministers. In the next decade over 40 pastors from The Netherlands entered the CRC. Even though a few of these may have fulfilled Gritter's pessimistic prophecy (and many retained at least some of their Dutch accent), most of them became sterling pastors in the Canadian churches, as well as leaders in the CRC denomination. Thus the new immigrants were overwhelmingly in favour of creating and joining churches – especially the Christian Reformed Church. The Christian schools did not enjoy such complete support, but the *Calvinist Contact* does not record much question or opposition. There were other attempts at creating a separate Christian witness and/or organizations that did not garner full support.



These attempts to create separate Christian/Reformed organizations grew out of Reformed conditions in the Netherlands. Put briefly, the Reformed leader Abraham Kuiper and others encouraged the founding of Christian organizations for many areas of life, for example: communication (newspapers and radio), economics (business, labour, and farming organizations – supposedly some communities had a Christian Goat Breeding society), recreation (gymnastics

and, of course, soccer), government (a political party), and higher education (The Free University). The big question was: Should the Reformed immigrants attempt to duplicate these organizations?

The question was repeated many times and the answers varied. In December 1950, for example, one letter writer titled his piece “Imitating the Netherlands?... Never!!” The author pointed out that the Dutch Christian Farmers Society might propound Christian theories, but that in practice it sided with the farm owners and continued unjust wages for the farm labourers. Christian organizations were often a sham. Many others, however, argued that both biblical principles and greater justice in society demanded Christian organizations. Besides, there was not only a need for Christian labour organizations but a wider need in Canada for a “Christian Social Movement” (11/1950). A note of realism was added when the editor observed that “in the early years one cannot expect much support from Canadian Christian citizens” (5/1951). Apparently the Dutch Reformed immigrants were to be in the vanguard of such a movement. The slow but continued progress of, for example, the Christian Labour Association of Canada and the Citizens for Public Justice did take hold in Canada, and the *Calvinist Contact* faithfully reported on these and other organizations.

Christian university?

The “imitation” of Reformed life in the Netherlands was seen most dramatically in the establishment of a Reformed/Christian university. This effort took longer to arrive on the scene, began with the proverbial “bang,” and was the cause of more future writing in *Calvinist Contact* than any other such venture. The June 29, 1956 issue carried an article under the bold-print title, “Association for Reformed Scientific Studies: Een Vrije Universiteit in Canada?” The article (in Dutch) opened with “This is a historical day. That was the conclusion of 40 Calvinists in Canada.” A few sentences later the main speaker alluded to the shortcomings of the Christian Reformed Church and the opposition already experienced from “the brethren.” The Aug. 3 issue of that year announced that 38 people in Toronto had founded a local chapter of the new Association. The speaker, Rev. Henry Venema, mentioned that the CRC has never taught that God's Word is a light in all of life. In a “Rectification” in the Aug. 10 issue the speaker clarified that he had said that the majority of the CRC never had this insight. In the Aug. 24 issue, one of the *Calvinist Contact* editors, Rev. John Gritter, expressed his dismay about this judgment of the CRC. He called it “a stab in the back of his beloved denomination – ‘my Mother.’” In the Aug. 31 issue Rev. Venema answered with a long response. Another article in Sept. 7 defended the new Association. Even though the CRC has a college and a seminary in Grand Rapids, the Association intended to build a Calvinistic university. An article in the Nov. 9 issue reported



that a “deeply moving” meeting took place in Toronto to further the cause of the Association. Unfortunately, a number of participants took issue with the June meeting which had invited certain people but ignored others. The discussion that followed was not uplifting.

Thus within six months the new Association had elicited six articles (strongly for or strongly against). Such reactions became a pattern for much of the history of the AARS (an unfortunate acronym for English-speaking people; the acronym was changed later to AACS and still later to ICS – The Institute for Christian Studies). A year later (11/22/1957) Rev. Gritter still had the same reservations. He raised questions and urged caution about the development of a Christian university. He emphasized the need for strengthening elementary and secondary education, and to go very carefully and slowly with plans for a university.

I could quote many, many more letters and articles to demonstrate how *Calvinist Contact* was often the chief vehicle for discussion about the ARSS, and to show that the Institute for Christian Studies was a source of great inspiration and steady support, as well as of strong opposition and controversy. (For another indispensable book, see Robert VanderVennen, *A University for the People: A History of the Institute for Christian Studies* [2008]. The book itself is controversial. VanderVennen portrays the great promise of the ICS, as well as its marvellous contributions to the Dutch immigrant constituency and a worldwide audience. It often produced Christian scholarship at its best. But he also deals with the many blunders and controversies, both within the ICS and in its relationship to its initial constituency, the Christian Reformed Church. And he targets many people by name.)

My perusal of the *Calvinist Contact* was largely limited to the early years. For these years the CC was a wonderful mirror of an immigrant church and community. Hardships and achievements, foolish mistakes and great achievements, narrow-minded arguments and generous projects, petty squabbles and great faith – all of these were reflected in the pages of a fine newspaper.

And for many years on the other side of the border I have continued to be informed and inspired by the *Calvinist Contact* and *Christian Courier*. It has been an excellent source, an ongoing history, of recording the settlement of struggling Dutch groups in Canada and their development into a vibrant North American Christian community.

Harry Boonstra is a Calvin College Theological Librarian emeritus and, in a former life, a harvester of onions in the Holland Marsh. Unlike much of the rest of the world, he still reads books and journals.



Features

Building relationships through plants

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Karin Vermeer recently began a new career in horticultural therapy (HT). *Christian Courier* interviewed her to learn how God led her to this change of vocation and what it involves.

How did God lead you to this new occupation?

Six years ago, I became restless in my role as co-owner/retail manager at Vermeer's Garden Centre and Flower Shop in Welland, Ont. I had the feeling that God had more in store for me ... a gentle nudging you might say! I talked with my brother, the co-owner, about the possibility of my stepping out of the family business.

God continued to show me that this was the road he wanted me on by opening up opportunities. Two years ago, I'd never heard of Horticultural Therapy. Throughout my career at Vermeer's, I would visit retirement homes with my plants. I also talked to horticultural societies and church groups. I didn't know that what I was doing was HT! God led me to realize that this is what he wanted me to do full time.

What is Horticultural Therapy?

HT uses plants to bring about healing or wellness in a person's life. Whether dealing with old age, mental disability, brain injury, or addictions, horticultural therapists can use plants to bring about change.

All activities are centered on the client. First, we build relationships so that clients feel safe, unthreatened and cared for. Once they have that assurance, we work on focusing their energy on plant-related activities, such as taking cuttings from easy-to-grow tropical plants, or creating something like a wreath or flower arrangement from natural seeds, leaves, or pods collected in the woods.

We always work toward a goal, whether that is the clients' ability to use their hands, in the case of seniors struggling with arthritis, for example, or, if clients are depressed, allowing them to experience how caring for plants gives purpose to life. The goal for each client is determined by those involved with the client's treatment, so all can work together to reach the goals of success and wellness.

What are the benefits of HT to the client?

HT helps clients restore or maintain physical abilities by doing gardening or plant-related activities. These types of tasks can also develop motor skills, eye-hand coordination, exercise, endurance and strength.

Using plants, clients can enjoy their senses – seeing, smelling, tasting, touching. Herbs are the perfect plants to grow for this purpose. Gardens and growing areas, such as greenhouses or sunrooms, serve to spark comprehension and draw patients' attention to growing plants and flowers. Individually or through groups, clients can be encouraged to share their emotions and feelings. Plant projects can build skill levels, self esteem and confidence. Certain tasks such as pruning and hoeing can provide an acceptable way of expressing anger and aggression. Floral design and arranging can be a perfect activity to enhance creativity and imagination. Working with plants gives a sense of nurturing.

Horticulture therapy programs are a great place for clients to develop and interact with others and to take instruction from the HT. The horticultural therapist is able

to observe the clients' behaviours at the same time, noting such behaviours as isolating themselves from the group, working independently, socially appropriate involvement, or working with others.

What is your educational background in the area of HT?

I have been studying "Horticulture as Therapy" under Mitchell Hewson HTM, who is the Horticultural Therapist at Homewood, the psychiatric hospital in Guelph, Ont. He is the person who brought HT to Ontario, so I was very pleased to be studying under him. This course was only offered as an internship until last year. Now it's available online (http://horticultureastherapy.com/About_Mitchell_Hewson.htm). That made it convenient for me to be able to study while I was working part time.



Karin and her plants bring joy and healing.

What steps did you need to take to begin an HT program?

I took the following steps: study to receive accreditation, set up my own business, contact all the retirement homes in Niagara and set up appointments to discuss bringing HT to them, and follow up with any other contacts that have shown interest.

Which specific groups have you targeted and why?

When I started thinking about HT and what groups I should target, I always thought of seniors. They have to give up so much when moving into a retirement home and it has been my goal to bring plants and gardening back to them. But as I was working with seniors and retirees, other organizations contacted me to work with them, for example, organizations whose clients have brain injuries, children's groups like the Niagara Children's Centre and Scientists in School.

How have your own clients benefited from HT?

Every time I leave a session at the retirement homes, several clients tell me how much they appreciate the activities with plants. They consistently mention the fact that they are still able to create or grow something of beauty. They are thrilled that after all the opportunities for gardening have been taken from them, they can now look forward to doing so in their respective retirement homes with

new friends.

Recently, while at a retirement home, I had 11 women come out for the session. While I left them for a few minutes to collect other participants, they introduced themselves to each other. This particular home is relatively new so there are many new residents weekly. This is a wonderful way to engage them socially, especially in a time of their lives that can be very difficult.

Another example is a woman who has been a customer of mine for years at Vermeer's. She now suffers from Alzheimer's and lives in a retirement home that I'm working at. She saw me walking in and immediately recognized me. She asked if I was coming to do something with plants. She was not aware of the HT program we had set up. In the session, we took cuttings from many different types of plants. She knew all their names. She kept repeating that

she was glad that I was there. After we completed the session, she looked at me and asked if she lived in that home and if I could show her to her room. It was so wonderful to see that she was completely present (physically and mentally!) during the plant activity.

How have you benefited from working with plants, both in your previous career and now as a HT?

I'm so fortunate to have had such wonderful opportunities to be able to do what I love. My love for plants started at a young age, working alongside my dad in the family business. I knew early on that this was what I wanted to do for a career.

It is such a pleasure working with plants and flowers and watching them grow from a tiny seed into something that brings life and joy to people. For instance, while at Vermeer's, when customers would walk into the store, they would stop,

breathe in and relax. Just being in a place where things grow gives us a sense of awe. I had so many customers tell me often that they came in to decompress and unwind. So many people lead such busy and stressful lives; plants can play an important role in bringing people back to earth – literally!

And now that I'm working as a HT, I have truly found my niche. It is not a fast-paced life like I am used to. In retail there was always the sense of urgency to get things done as quickly as possible because there was so much to do or there were more customers waiting! I love being able to take the time to spend with individuals, learning about them and getting to know their stories. I enjoy building relationships with others, especially those who have special needs or have no one else to talk to.

All of this is very spiritual for me. God has blessed me so richly that I in turn can bless others. It's never about me and what I'm doing. God has given me these gifts and he expects me to share them. It's about being Jesus' hands and feet for his children, no matter what their age or circumstance may be. >

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Features

A hard look at hunger: Report says thousands died needlessly in East Africa

Will Braun

In a January report, two major humanitarian agencies confessed that they, along with the rest of the world, responded too slowly to the food crisis in East Africa last year, and that thousands of people died unnecessarily as a result. "How come, more than a generation after man walked on the moon, we would let fellow human beings die needlessly?" asks Jan Egeland, former UN Relief Coordinator, in the report.

The document, entitled "A Dangerous Delay," was commissioned by Oxfam and Save the Children. It stands as a challenge to citizens of donor nations to examine the performance of the agencies they support. It also challenges them to understand the complexity of responding to hunger, a task that is far more complicated than just securing donations, loading maize on trucks in Africa and delivering it to a jostling crowd of hungry people in an arid village.

The report's blunt admission of failure and its discussion of complexity deviate from the usual public storyline about food crises, which tends to go something like this: hungry people urgently need our help, aid agencies responsibly and promptly distribute food bought with our donations, lives are saved and our backs get patted. There is often a twist – a corrupt government or a war in the way – but the plot is relatively standard. And misleading.

Addressing food disasters is often a logistical and political puzzle. Many things can go wrong, as happened in East Africa.

In May 2011 Dan Leonard predicted that the food crisis in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia would hit the news in three months and at that point aid agencies, including the one he works for, would look back and wish they had acted sooner. Leonard is the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) country representative for Ethiopia, along with his wife Karin Kliwer. He was right, though the TV cameras showed up a bit sooner than he expected.

The media came in July – led by the BBC – and only then was the international response jolted into high gear.

A full year prior, early warning systems began indicating trouble. Jim Cornelius, head of Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) – of which MCC and Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) are members – said



Shipment of Oxfam food aid for East Africa.

his organization received these warnings and discussed them with partners. Speaking from Ethiopia, where he was on a media tour, Cornelius said that by the end of 2010 the rains had clearly failed and concern was growing. The wheels of response were in motion, he said, but "before you know it, a few months drift by." It was not until March 3, 2011 that the first CFGB funds were committed to the crisis. And it was not until mid-July 2011 – in the wake of the media blitz – that CFGB issued appeals for donations.

CRWRC committed \$1.1 million to a project in Kenya on March 22 and sent out its first public communication about the food crisis on July 8. According to CRWRC spokesperson Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, the organization needed to wait with publicity until the issue was "significantly in the media" otherwise their fundraising appeals "would have fallen flat."

Saying that CRWRC has responded to droughts in Kenya "nearly every other year for the last decade," deRoo VanderBerg responded to the report by saying "we were, and always are, well aware of the situation."

Famine is a slow-onset disaster, unlike earthquakes or tsunamis which are sudden, dramatic and telegenic. This adds complexity. Cornelius says it is hard to muster a sense of urgency in the early stages because "things on the ground are not noticeably problematic at that point." Unfortunately, "by the time they do become problematic, then you're late." All players, including head office staff in North America, need to be more responsive, he says.

Urgency is critical, but addressing hunger is about more

Emergency food assistance:

15 typical steps in a western-based NGO response*

Note: In cases such as East Africa, emergency response must be seen in the context of long term work to reduce people's vulnerability to food insecurity, which is an essential element of the overall response.

1. Request for assistance from local partner organizations
2. Situation assessment by NGO and partner staff
3. Project design (selection criteria for beneficiaries, determination of appropriate food ration, length of response, etc.)
4. Approval of project by government authorities in local country
5. Submission of plan for review and funding by NGO or other donors
6. Revision and approval of project plan
7. Transfer of funds
8. Selection of beneficiaries
9. Local procurement of food (call to tender, selection, contract)
10. Independent inspection of commodity for quality (such as moisture level, etc.)
11. Delivery of commodity to partner warehouse
12. Distribution of food assistance
13. Collection of baseline household food security data for monitoring and evaluation
14. Monitoring by partner and local NGO office
15. Submission and review of project narrative and financial reports

*Not included are steps such as sending donkeys to haul grain after the truck gets stuck.

Source: Mennonite Central Committee.

than emergency response. Equally important are ongoing efforts to reduce people's vulnerability to disaster. This is called "disaster risk reduction" and the "Dangerous Delay" report stresses it, too. Manage risks in advance, it advises, instead of just managing the crisis when it hits. "Early action is more cost effective." And it saves more lives.

Assisting people in their homes is cheaper and more effective than assisting them in camps, after they've sold or lost the animals and other assets that could provide a livelihood later. And even before any signs of drought, efforts are needed to reduce risk. Drought will happen; rains will fail. But famine and starvation can be prevented if systems are in place to prepare people for lean times and assist them through those periods. Disaster risk reduction is an ongoing aspect of CFGB and CRWRC work in the region.

Despite the complexities of humanitarian assistance and the failures in East Africa, the death toll there – an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 – was far lower than in the 1984 Ethiopian famine, in which nearly a million starved. Still, thousands of people died needlessly, largely people from Somalia where conflict and governance issues hindered the response.

With their report, Oxfam and Save the Children have emphasized the need to learn from the mistakes of 2011. They have also set an example by discarding the simplistic food aid narrative, and entrusting their supporters with a frank discussion of the complexities of their work.

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A hard look at hunger and Emergency food assistance originally appeared in Canadian Mennonite.



Food Crisis 101

Drought: Failure of rains; a natural disaster.

Famine: Failure of human systems to respond adequately to drought. Defined as extreme food shortage, acute malnutrition, at least two deaths per 10,000 people daily. (Though drought hit Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, only Somalia suffered famine.)

Shipping food: CRWRC ships almost no food from North America. Food aid is purchased in the affected country or region. This avoids time delays and negative impacts on local food markets.

Global food shortage: Does not exist. Famine is an issue not of the general availability of food but access to it. There has been plenty of food in Ethiopia throughout the crisis, but certain people have lacked access.

Media: A food crisis is a slow-onset disaster, unlike an earthquake or tsunami. By the time there is anything dramatic for TV cameras to capture, it is too late to avert crisis.

Partners: In a majority of cases, CRWRC provides emergency food assistance only when asked to do so by a local partner organization. Partners have the best knowledge of who is most vulnerable and what an appropriate response is.

Disaster risk reduction: Ongoing, long term development and assistance programs intended to reduce the vulnerability of people to disasters such as drought.

Image of Ethiopia: The 1984 famine, which was a landmark global media event, branded Ethiopia as dusty, helpless and starvation-plagued – not an enviable reputation. While the country of 90 million still ranks 174 on the UN's Human Development Index, annual economic growth over the past seven years has averaged 11 percent. Construction cranes abound in Addis Ababa, the capital. The agricultural sector is one of the drivers. The government has also implemented some of the largest safety net and risk reduction programs in the world, as evidenced in the fact that though the 2011 drought was worse than the 1984 drought, far fewer people died.

Climate change: The CRWRC website says "Climate change has increased Kenya's vulnerability to drought."

Features

Our guest writers, Brent van Staalduinen and Bert den Boggende, offer some final thoughts in our series on pacifism. There's been divergence of approach, but companionable depth of thinking. *CC* hopes our readers have been encouraged to reflect on the challenging and complex intersection of Christian faith and military conflict. Obviously, a Reformed view of pacifism needs to integrate a wide range of historical, theological, and experiential factors. Thanks to both Brent and Bert for their explorations of this timely subject.

Integrated, holistic pacifism



Bert den Boggende

The minutes of February 1916 of the British Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) mentioned for the first time an interest in supporting a delinquent colony. Since the outbreak of war there had been a significant increase in youth delinquency, especially in London, and the treatment of these young delinquents was unsatisfactory. They could be whipped, sent to industrial and reformatory schools, placed in detention or imprisoned. A London magistrate noted that there were only three experiments trying to improve the lot of these delinquents. In May 1916 the FOR was able to purchase a centuries-old, 38 acre manor in Leicestershire. In June the FOR entered a relatively new territory when the first youths, aged 16 and older, arrived.

The experiment did not last long and the FOR noted in 1918 that its success was mixed. The London magistrate, however, paid the staff a "warm tribute to the marvelous patience, self-sacrifice, and devotion of those who are responsible for it," hoping that the "invaluable experience gained" would lead to "lasting success." In 1925 an author remarked that the experiment's "principles embodied have already influenced the aims, the methods, and the discipline in ordinary reformatories of the more conventional type."

In 1916 the FOR also discussed a scheme dealing with labour relations developed by the Quaker Malcolm Sparkes. As a managing director of a London architectural woodworkers' firm he had been involved in difficult labour negotiations during the 1914 industrial strife. Inspired by speeches given at the FOR's founding meeting held Dec. 28-31, 1914, he had been working on an Industrial Parliament scheme which envisaged cooperation between employers and employees. Only after the war was he able to implement part of his scheme, usually characterized as guild socialism.

In addition to these activities, the FOR published a journal called *The Venturer*, and pamphlets and books such as Maude Royden's *The Great Adventure*. It promoted Theodora Wilson Wilson's *The Wrestlers*, written before the war but published after *The Last Weapon* of 1916 and *The Weapon Unsheathed: A Spiritual Adventure* of 1917. It also published a number of school textbooks.

Pacifism involves action

Perhaps you are wondering, "What do these activities have to do with pacifism?" Everything! As Wilson indicated, pacifism involved action. Sounding much like Kuyper's "square inch" statement, the Presbyterian minister Richard Roberts, in a speech at the FOR's Cambridge founding meeting, posited that pacifism needed to be integrated in all realms of life. The experiment with the young offenders was much more than a service to the coun-

try and to the young offenders; it was pacifism in action through reconciliation and a way to prepare for the coming of the divine kingdom.

This novel understanding of pacifism was largely due to the Welshman Rev. Richard Roberts (1874-1945), who had moved to London in 1903. At the outbreak of World War I he called a number of friends asking them to meet at his home. They agreed that war was incompatible with Christianity, but had little idea how to go from there. In the course of several months Roberts clarified his mind. In his opinion the existing peace organizations had compromised their perspective; something new needed to take their place. On Dec. 4 he stated that "Pacifism + non-resistance are by-products of some central things to which we have to testify."

Included in those central things was a vision of the Kingdom of God, "at once a social vision and a way of life." While human beings could not implement that kingdom, "the *only* road to the City of God" was by quickening people's conscience. Another ingredient was love, the "solvent of personality." Love, exemplified in "the stupendous uniqueness of the cross, could be costly, but it was the basis, the beginning and end of life." Jesus' love was characterized by sacrifice, service, and humility. Roberts also argued that, based on 2 Cor. 5:17-19, Christians were in the business of reconciliation, the "great social transaction" between God and men and reproduced in human relationships.

Peace as a religious experience

On Dec. 28 he declared "it was not 'pacifism' that we wanted, still less 'neutrality', but Peace conceived as a positive force, Peace conceived as Love." Peace, as he would later state, was "not a military thing, not a diplomatic attainment, and not a political state, but a *religious experience*." The new organization's constitution, *The Basis*, emphasizing "doing" rather than "being," stated in Articles 3 and 4 that the condemnation of war was tied to a service in all areas of life, so that the Kingdom of God could come about. This new pacifism, replacing the bankrupt old simple pacifism, was to be an activity preparatory to the coming of the divine Kingdom, comparable, I want to suggest, to John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord.

More recently, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, two well-known members of the FOR, though not of the British branch, have exemplified this attitude of reconciliation.

Bibliography

The archival material of the FOR is in the London School of Economics.

Bert den Boggende has a PhD in British history and is a retired teacher. He lives in Brooks, Alta.

This unexpected love



Brent van Staalduinen

All the shades of green in the world, and we're learning how to blend into all of them. The master corporal is stalking amongst the shell scrapes and yelling at us, her web gear heavy on her shoulders and hips like the lifesaving burdens they truly are. We all pack it the same – recruit to sergeant to general, medic to infanteer to sailor. Rations, ammo, extra socks, foot powder, and a field dressing taped to the shoulder that we are never, ever to use for anyone other than ourselves. *You die because you give someone your bandage, she barks, how useless are you to your patients?*

How dead are you to those you are commanded to protect?

Someone asks about the red crosses and the protection of medical personnel under the Geneva Convention. All of our red crosses are covered in hessian and camouflage, and our GC cards are stashed in our secret Velcro pockets – neither is bulletproof, and yet we stand so clearly and cleanly between the aggressors and our patients. We learn to show the colours but we learn to hide them too, just in case the rule of law gets lost on its way to the battlefield.

Would it sound strange to you if I told you that love brought me here? Would you smirk a little as you stare at the mottled greasepaint that disrupts the features of my face, or the bayonet scabbard on my belt? Would you think it a stretch, maybe, connecting Christ's mission to the glistening points of the 5.56mm rounds we learn to put through a human's centre-of-mass from 200m away?

The sergeant's mouth is so foul your ears will bleed – mine are still burning from two days ago, when I dropped my rifle during advance-to-contact drills. He threw more four-letter words at me in about a minute than I probably heard in the first 19 years of my life. He's like an old devil, terrifying and hard. But hearing him reassure the injured, watching his hands move so gently as he treats wounds and trauma, and you'd swear he's Mother Theresa, if she had an army behind her.

He might be the holiest man I've ever met.

I'll feel like calling home after we return to the tent lines in camp. The coin slot on the little silver plate on the pay phone will cut my hazy reflection in two, but both halves of my face will be equally filthy. *I'm fine, Mom. Nice*



The Statue of Reconciliation in St. Michael's Cathedral in Coventry, England, depicts two former enemies forgiving each other.

to speak with you. It's hard work, but it's going great. I'm learning all about field first aid, medevac procedures, and basic trauma life support. I'm learning how to save lives.

I won't tell her about the sidearm provision in the GC. Someone, somewhere decided that it would be permissible for medical personnel to carry sidearms for personal defence, perhaps envisioning nice, polite pistols in quiet holsters or quaint bolt-action rifles slung over noble shoulders. But the master corporal laughs it away – *You're going to carry C7 rifles so you can actually protect your patients. And they'll be fully loaded. And you'll learn how to shoot to kill.*

But maybe don't tell Mom. Maybe don't share too much with anyone you know, go to school with, sit next to in church – your heart's not judgment-proof, either, and people can cut so freely with words sharper than swords, more penetrating than bullets.

The sergeant's on a tear, yelling at all of us after someone asked whether we would be "crossing the line." *You're not waging war, you're saving lives – the ones you've resuscitated, the ones in slings and bandages and splints, the unconscious ones, the ones who've lost limbs, and the ones who're going to die anyhow. And you paint your face and camouflage yourselves and your vehicles so that if the time comes, you'll have the time to make that decision to save the lives under your care. And get out afterwards. Live.*

Someone has to stand there, right?

Someone, sure.

Someone else, maybe.

But that's me standing there, my rifle heavy, its magazine bulging with 30 full-metal-jacketed life or death decisions. That's me not fine with lethal protection, but also not fine with leaving it to someone else. That's me called to it, feeling it in my sinews and prayer-sore knees, even though I know that, in that moment of decision, it's not love or Christ that I'll be thinking about. It could be you.

Could be all of us.

Read more about Brent van Staalduinen and his work at brentvans.com. He lives in Hamilton, Ont.

Columns

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til



North American evangelicalism has greatly influenced Reformed churches in the last decades. That's not all bad. The evangelical spirit has infused a warmth into many congregations that were previously too reticent to enthusiastically express their faith and to give witness to the world. Some of those same reluctant congregations were no doubt too cerebral in their teaching and worship. A head-but-not-heart approach allowed some Reformed church members to hang onto their baptized-into-the-covenant status without truly making covenant faith their own, and the joyous guiding principle of their lives.

But there are downsides to the evangelical influence. One is the abandoning of solid hymnody for something altogether more spiritually ephemeral and artistically shallow. That's of major consequence to me as a near life-long church musician, and I hope to address this issue later this year. Yet despite that, what concerns me more is the increasing lack of "sound doctrine" and systematic, biblical training of Reformed church members in their congregations. That lack is also revealed in decreased numbers of parents committing to sending their children to Christian schools: schools that at their best teach sound doctrine by deepening the biblical faith-education of the home and the church; schools that inculcate into students the ability to think Christianly and develop a Christian worldview.

The slacking off of deep biblical study by the CRC – in sermons, Sunday school, catechism, adult Bible study – sucks its fuel from the spirit of anti-intellectualism that hovers over many evangelical congregations. That flame is further fanned by our society, which far too often rewards cluelessness. It's now okay to hold an opinion on everything while having very little real knowledge (much less wisdom) about anything. We need to zealously combat that spirit, especially when it comes to our faith.

The slacking off of deep biblical study by the CRC – in sermons, Sunday school, catechism, adult Bible study – sucks its fuel from the spirit of anti-intellectualism that hovers over many evangelical congregations. That flame is further fanned by our society, which far too often rewards cluelessness. It's now okay to hold an opinion on everything while having very little real knowledge (much less wisdom) about anything. We need to zealously combat that spirit, especially when it comes to our faith.

No need for theology?

It makes sense that members of a tradition (Calvinist) and church (Christian Reformed) that has historically valued careful biblical-theological study not just for clergy but all members (remember the "priesthood of all believers"?) might react against that tradition and church if they make faith become merely academic. I am sympathetic to that reaction. But we must carefully examine what we're embracing as an alternative.

Many evangelicals and even their pastors will tell you, "I don't need theology. I need only the Bible." They react especially strongly against the rigorous theology of Calvinism, whose five main points (every one!) are wrong.

What our itching ears want to hear

But theology versus the Bible is a straw man, a false dichotomy. God's biblical revelation of himself and his acts in our creation, fall, redemption and the eventual consummation of all things *is* theology, and wondrously "systematic." God created us to communicate profoundly with each other through language and he communicates with us in the same manner. He made us inherently people of the Book, *his* Book. Is such a God happy with our reducing his special revelation to a few handfuls of stories with moral applications while dismissing the rest as remote and irrelevant? Is he pleased with our adopting of secular attitudes because we don't know what *he* requires of us? Is the God who created the immensely complex macrocosm of the universe and the intricate microcosm of our own human brains pleased when any of his only-a-little-lower-than-the-angels creatures shun the mental powers he gave each of us in specific measure?



We can't all be intellectual giants or academic scholars, but every one of us needs to be a "scholar" of the Bible.

We can't all be intellectual giants or academic scholars. But every one of us needs to be a "scholar" of the Bible. God expects it. He gets glory from it even while we grow in faith and love of him. If we neglect that or do it superficially we leave ourselves open to being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14, KJV). The damp air of false doctrine is soul-permeating. It will produce spiritual mold if we don't eradicate it.

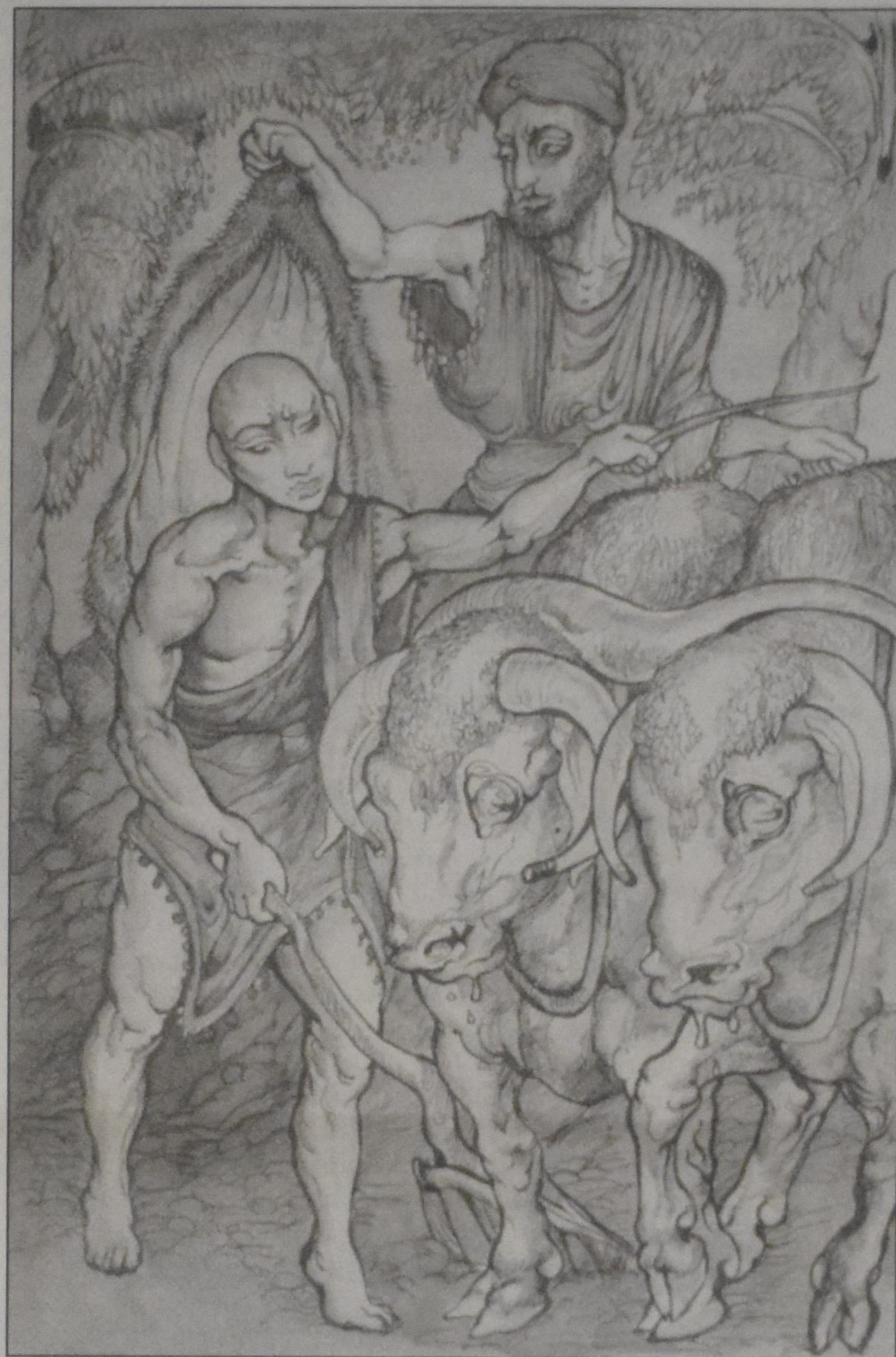
Can you recognize it when you encounter it?

Some churches have already decided that "heresy" is a quaint anachronism. But Paul tells Timothy, "Command certain people not to teach false doctrine any longer" (1 Tim. 1:3, NIV). False doctrine maligns God, creates false gods, deceives. It leads to the Abyss. To fight it you have to believe that sound doctrine is utterly important and has everything to do with our lives. Paul makes that clear when he says, "The sexually immoral, those practicing homosexuality, slave traders, liars and perjurers are living lives contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:10). Then he urges Timothy, "Watch your doctrine and your life closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (4:16).

Paul has another thing to say about doctrine, and it's shocking. There will come a time when people will not only ignore but "will not put up with sound doctrine." They will refuse to listen. "Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Tim. 4:3). Sounds familiar in the 21st century church! I pray our own ears will be attuned only to the sweet sound of God's sound doctrine that gives life.

Marian Van Til (mvantil@roadrunner.com) is a former CC editor living in Youngstown, NY.

Artful Eye



Elijah calls Elisha by artist Julia Stiles.



Julia Stiles is a self-taught illustrator/fine artist residing in New England. She believes art is one of the highest forms of expression and should not be overlooked as a means of worshiping God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. Check out her work at jstilesart.etsy.com or on her website at juliastiles.com.

Bending the Neck

"Hear and pay attention, do not be arrogant, for the Lord has spoken." Jer. 13:15

That bent posture of bowed head the act of submitting to the designer, stepping aside to consult, asking for guidance, tucking away that arrogant moment of thinking we know better than God; the attitude we seldom voice but often manifest in our decisions.



Linda Siebenga is a poet living in Central Alberta. Her latest work is *Earth Against Your Cheek*. Find Linda's website at inscribe.org under Members.



Columns

Flowers and Thistles

Curt Gesch



Igor Stravinsky wrote a ballet called *Le sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*). He was thinking of an Eastern European spring, evoked by a haunting melody from the bassoon and then powerful rhythms from the cellos and double basses.

Stravinsky was evoking a primitive worldview that saw blessings for the coming year as intimately connected to the worship of Nature. I recall that the rite involved a young girl dancing herself to death – a sort of sacrifice of a virgin that may have had some relationship to a successful harvest.

In Quick, B.C., Western Canada, we have quite a different rite, one which has nothing to do with Pantheism or Paganism. Performed primarily by middle-aged men, our rite involves visiting.

The snow is going fast. The urge to clean up, till soil, or begin a new project is set back with each temporary snow squall or the sun going behind a cloud. And we celebrate our rite and go visiting.

My friend, Steffen, stopped by one day at 9:15 a.m. to pick up a seed catalogue, stayed for “a quick coffee,” and left at 1:15 p.m. By then we had solved most of the world’s problems.

Another day. The sun came out again and I began to think about cleaning up the cowshed and planting some spinach under glass. But then Lou (another neighbour who lives one mile away through the

The rites of a rural spring

fields and six miles away by road) stopped in, looking for Steffen! We talked about cows, chickens and sheep, about how far away we were from major population centres and markets. About the quality of last year’s hay. About his new dog which we let out of the truck for, ah, evacuation.

All across the logging belt of Canada, the “bush is shutting down” due to spring break-up. Truck drivers and skidder operators find they have time to do all those postponed tasks that accumulated during the six months of 14-hour days. And so they have coffee – at a café or Tim Hortons – and procrastinate. They talk and talk; they socialize.

Perhaps, however, the spring rite of talking, jawing and jabbering is not procrastination. Perhaps it is one of things that makes life into human life. Nearly eliminated from life in a fragmented world of getting and spending is the leisure to talk, to commune. Artificial methods – CB radios, text messages, etc. – just aren’t the same. Neither is coffee good for much except a quick boost unless time and companionship accompany it.

Cohousing

Earlier this month my wife and I attended an illustrated lecture by Charles Durrett, North America’s foremost promoter and architect of the idea of cohousing. Imagine a cluster of homes, for seniors only or multi-generational. Part of the complex is a “common house” with spaces for commu-

nal dining or dancing, for conversation and gentle recreation.

The owners-to-be of the homes work together to plan the amount of private space, garden locations, the best spot for the bicycle shed, parking areas, whether there should be a greenhouse and how to reduce energy costs. The architect and developers serve the community by concretizing its plans. Residents are determiners of the shape of the mini-village.

As Durrett says, in cohousing $1 + 1 = 3$. That is, when we share our ideas, new possibilities appear; there is a multiplication of creativity. Working together, the key to cohousing, builds community in both the process and the final design.

Cohousing may be thought of as a current manifestation of the old community. One cohousing resident chose a living space as far from the parking area as possible so that she would be able to greet more neighbours as she returned from shopping. And as for the longer walk with groceries, she replied that she has to park about 300 feet from the supermarket in *their* parking lot, so the same walk past her neighbours would be easily possible. Another resident noted that as he walked to the common house each day he passed the home of a shut-in person and was able to give a greeting or short visit every day.

In our rural neighbourhood in Quick, B.C., we normally take a car or truck to do a stop-in visit. Our neighbours work hard to be a community. We have neighbour-



A cohousing community in Nashville, Tenn.

hood parties several times a year, but they take planning. Cohousing tries to make neighbourliness something causal and ordinary rather than a special event. Making neighbourliness a daily practice instead of a rite of spring sounds a lot to me like what Reformed Christians call a creational norm. I urge you to check it out.

(I’d write a bit more, but my computer is down and I need to drive a quarter mile on the road plus a quarter mile of driveway to my helpful neighbour so that I can type this article and send it off. When I’m done, we’ll have a little talking and a little more talking.)

For more on cohousing read Durrett’s book, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. Or type “Cohousing” into your search engine and be deluged with information.

Curt Gesch is a farmer, writer, preacher and talker. He lives in Quick, B.C.

Gathering Light

Emily Wierenga



She was six. Six years of bone and skin, and nothing could make her eat. They stuck her in a strait-jacket, this girl of six, her mouth like a bird’s, and they shoved food down her beak, but still, nothing. So they called him, a doctor who loved God, and he answered and he and his counselors got down on all fours and entered her world. No food, just them and her in a room, her skin so thin they could see her soul pulsing.

A few days later, this doctor was driving home and he was praying for she still hadn’t eaten. And then a sign: “Free kittens”. He pulled into the drive and asked for the runt, and the owner handed over a scruff of fur and said, “It won’t live long.” The doctor said, “Perfect.”

He turned around and drove back to the place where the girl sat alone. He gave her this kitten and told her, “It’s your job to keep it alive.”

She petted the kitten and played with it for hours on end, and one day later she asked for food. The counselor, who had

To love is to live

been on all fours, exited the room and stared at the doctor and said, “She’s asking for food. What do I do?” The doctor laughed. “Give her food. Give her whatever she wants.” She wanted pop-tarts.

The little girl fed the kitten and she fed herself and the doctor found this: for some reason, her body hadn’t been producing growth hormone, so she hadn’t been hungry. But then she began loving the kitten and her body began to grow.

In saving the scruffy cat that went on to produce grand-kittens which in turn saved other little children, the little girl saved herself. For love is this: the hormone that gives us an appetite to live. Without love, we die.

God is love.

And love is life.

This makes sense to me. To know God, our creator, is to know life.

Without love, we are but a clanging cymbal. An instrument that, when joined by an orchestra, becomes music, but without the orchestra, is only a headache of sound. This brings to mind the prayer

of Saint Francis of Assisi, the prayer my mother had hand stitched, hanging on the walls of our home; the prayer my father used to sing in his beautiful tenor:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

It wasn’t just a muffin. It was distraction, it was salvation, and it was mind-numbing hunger so the pain didn’t seem so full. I had lost our child. One moment I was carrying him or her or it, and the next moment, the five-week-old fetus was gone, and in its

place, a bloody nightgown and this half-eaten muffin. It would be all I ate that day, for the denial, the starvation, saved me.

Or I thought it did, or I thought maybe I didn’t deserve to eat because what kind of mother loses her child? Whatever it was, it was not food, it was a scapegoat.

Everybody has them. Scapegoats. Maybe it’s music. Maybe it’s cutting. Maybe it’s drugs. Maybe it’s over-eating. Whatever it is, it isn’t the problem. It’s a way to avoid the problem, to avoid feeling.

But eventually, the muffin isn’t enough; the cutting doesn’t cut it, the ice cream doesn’t fill us, and we’re left emptier for the trying. And so now, I’m practicing feeling. I’m letting myself enter the hard, as part of my healing.

I’m allowing myself to cry for hours and days and wondering if the sadness will ever stop and if my heart will ever wring out, all the while knowing I’m very alive for it all. For pain makes growth possible, and with growth, hope, and with hope, love. And in the end, it is love we’re all starving for.

Emily Wierenga lives with her family in Neerlandia, Alta.

Columns

Words from
Wild Horses

Kenny Warkentin



Recently I was talking with my co-worker about my two-year-old. She is a very energetic and talkative child, who has what I can see is a very strong personality. She wants to be with you and around you all the time. I enjoy her personality and she is a delight to my wife and I.

As she grows and matures, my daughter is learning through our parenting aspects of boundaries. I can see very clearly how she attempts to see if her parents really mean what they say. I try really hard not to laugh when she asserts herself and says no, but at times it makes me chuckle and I have to hide my face as I explain to her that her behaviour isn't appropriate or good. There are times when I have to give her warnings and set a consequence if she continues to disobey. If I have to send her to "time out," it is the worst thing for her. She loves to be around us so if I take her to her room and tell her she needs to stay there for a few minutes it's as if life has stopped. Instantaneously she is not just crying but wailing and screaming.

So she certainly doesn't like this "time out" thing. When she gets one, I reassure her that this is the consequence of her behaviour. After a few minutes in amongst the sobbing we talk about listening and doing the right thing; not because you have to but because your mommy and daddy love you more than anything and want you to obey.

This got me thinking about grace and my own personal journey of "time outs." My understanding of grace is that my heavenly Father LOVES me with extravagance. So much so that he sent his only son to die for my sin, to cleanse me and wash me and call me into a relationship with him. It isn't the "rules of right or wrong" that motivate me to do what is right, but this love relationship with Jesus that has captured my heart and now motivates me to obey him because I want to, not because I have to. If it was just about the rules, it would get pretty tiring to try hard to be perfect.

Perfectionism

I remember walking that out early in my adult life. I didn't have an awareness of how much God loved me and the fact that he wanted me to walk in this love relationship with him. In my humanness I sought to walk in perfectionism. Some-

Time out

how, I equated God the Father with rules and expectations. I needed to be perfect, or at least strive to be perfect, as much as possible. Oh, I failed miserably, which just made me heap shame on myself, thinking my Heavenly Father must really hate me. It eventually came to a breaking point and I just gave up. Seeking my own ways of justification didn't work, and I think God my Father allowed me to walk away and in a sense gave me a "time out."

He's given us free will, and in doing so doesn't force us like a dictator to follow him or even love him. Many years later I came to experience a loving Father who in this relationship gave me opportunity to really see and know my imperfections on a daily basis. This time it wasn't because of rules and expectations, but because I knew he loved me and I loved him.

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:15-16 that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him, and receive eternal life."

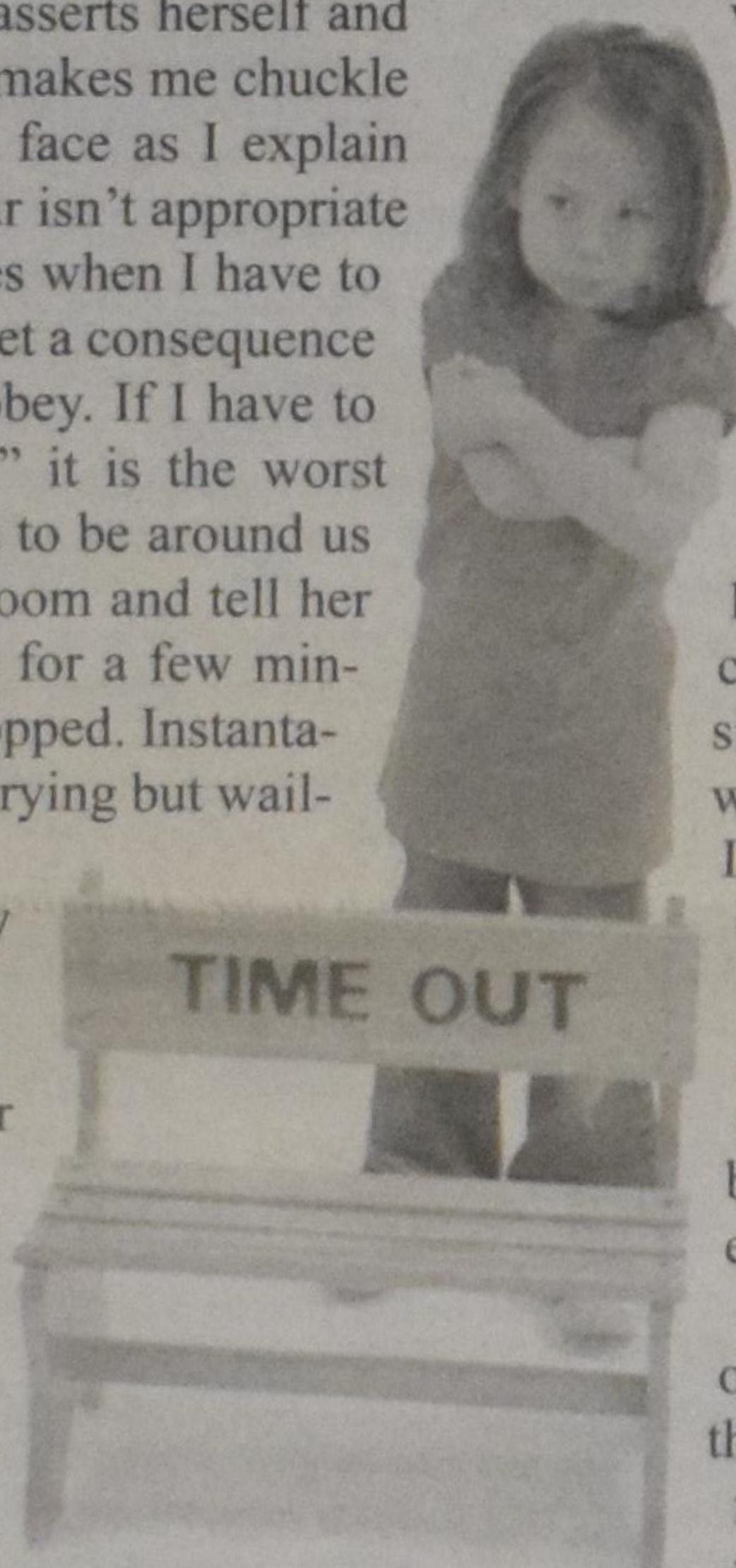
I know the imperfections of my humanness, the places that Jesus continues to want me to surrender to him. I see the old patterns that are being washed and restored and made whole. Sometimes I can even look back and know that when I disobeyed, God put me

in a "time out." He never stopped loving me, but he allowed me to step away from his love and the life he wanted me to live.

So, I see my daughter who is learning about unconditional love. Will my mommy and daddy love me if I do this? Do they love me when they put me on a "time out?" Hopefully as we parent her, she will begin to see her heavenly Father in a way that shows unconditional love, a love that no matter what will never change.

Kenny Warkentin (kennyp66@gmail.com) works full time as an urban missionary with Living Waters Canada and is an artist and musician. He lives in Winnipeg with his wife and daughter.

Giving a child a "time out" can illustrate for adults how we should view our heavenly Father.



Our World Today

Bert Hielema



Collapse happens all the time. Come to think of it, the Bible starts with collapse right in the Garden of Eden when the good life there suddenly turns sour. Both the Flood and the Tower of Babel triggered collapse, also happening almost overnight. The Bible also ends with collapse, when our present world order, Babylon, goes bankrupt.

God was directly involved in Noah's rescue and in thwarting communication when humanity sought to dominate the earth by erecting a skyscraper. Later God started a hands-off policy; see Deuteronomy 32:20 "I will hide my face to see what their end will be." This heralds a drastic divine departure by allowing humanity to go its own way, thereby acknowledging that mankind has come of age. God's new approach is especially evident today as humans have re-built the Tower of Babel in the form of the World Wide Web and Everywhere English.

Jared Diamond, a professor of geography, wrote a 575 page book simply called *Collapse* (the subtitle is *How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*). He devotes one chapter to Easter Island, which was discovered by Jacob Roggeveen on Apr. 5, 1722, Easter Sunday. There that globetrotting Dutchman saw something most astonishing, a landscape with huge stone statutes but devoid of trees and inhabitants. Apparently the native religion required these immense images, which came at the expense of the native trees that were used for transporting logs and scaffolding. Writes Diamond: "What did the Easter Islander who cut down the last palm tree say? Like modern loggers, did he shout 'Jobs, not trees!'? Or: 'Technology will solve our problems, never fear, we'll find a substitute for wood!'"

Diamond also devotes a chapter to the Maya realm which flourished in Mexico for some 700 years starting around 800 A.D. A few weeks ago it was discovered that a 25-40 percent reduction in the rainfall – resulting in famine – was a deciding factor in Maya's demise. Will an ultra-dry season in North America, the world's bread basket, have a similar result?

Sudden drops

Late last year Niall Ferguson's *Civilization: The West and the Rest* confirmed that civilizations do not rise, fall and then gently decline. Rather, their shape is more like a steep slope that quite suddenly drops off like a cliff.

Ferguson, a Harvard history professor, points out that the Roman Empire collapsed within a few decades in the early fifth century, tipped over the edge of chaos by barbarian invaders, internal divisions and energy shortfalls. In the space of a generation, the vast imperial metropolis of Rome fell into disrepair, the aqueducts broken, the splen-

Collapse

did marketplaces deserted. The Ming dynasty's rule in China also fell apart with extraordinary speed in the mid-17th century, succumbing to interior strife and external invasion. Again, the transition from seeming normalcy to anarchy took little more than a decade.



Stone statues on Easter Island.

A more recent and familiar example of precipitous decline is the 1989-91 collapse of the Soviet Union. And, if you still doubt that collapse comes suddenly, just think of how the dictatorships of North Africa and the Middle East disappeared last year. Twelve months ago, Messrs. Ben Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi seemed secure in their gaudy palaces. Here yesterday, gone today.

What all these collapsed powers have in common is that the complex social systems that underpinned them suddenly ceased to function. One minute rulers had legitimacy in the eyes of their people, and the next they did not. This process also happens quite often in financial markets.

We do well to reflect on our own situation. Don't think for a moment that our present state of bliss is permanent. History suggests that one day everything smells like roses, the next day we experience a death spiral when the cozy familiar fades away like a figure in the fog.

With everything now having global implications, one catastrophic event – think bombing Iran or the banks owning up to their debts – could quite well result in a global commercial collapse and accelerate the coming of Judgment Day. When this happens we will all appear before Jesus charged with crimes against creation in whatever form. Our civilization is especially guilty of greed, the root of all evil, which results from worshipping the idol of infinite growth in a finite world.

Jesus' primary mission – and the church's task as well – has always been the coming of the Kingdom, the New Creation, with the redeemed of the Lord as agents of organic innovation (John 3:16-17). Since we have totally failed on that score, and, in fact, have actually done the exact opposite, the old has to go before the new appears: collapse has to occur. Welcome it.

Bert Hielema (hielema@allstream.net) lives in Tweed, Ont. He keeps a blog: <http://hielema.ca.blog/>.

Classifieds

Anniversaries

1952 May 9 2012

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord and he will do this.
Psalm 37: 4-5

With thanksgiving to the Lord, we share with you the **60th wedding anniversary** of our parents and grandparents,

PETER AND ANNA ZWART

We wish them our love, and pray the Lord's continued blessing in years to come.

Richard & Cheryl Peter & Carol
Anita & Michael David & Lynn

Mark & Dianne

Also 14 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren

Address: 15-10 Wentworth Drive
Grimsby, ON L3M 5G3

Note date of Open House
(Omission re: Apr 9 issue)

FRED AND TRUDY FRANKRUYTER (nee Walsma)

On the occasion of their 60th wedding anniversary there will be an **Open House** at 4 Hawthorne Ave in Cobourg, Ont on **April 29** from 2:00-4:00 pm.

All are cordially invited.
Best Wishes only please.

1947 April 29 2012
Lioessens, Friesland Bowmanville, Ont.

Through God's abiding love and grace we celebrate our **65th Wedding Anniversary!**

RAY AND ALMA HEERINGA (nee Feddema)

We have been blessed with:
4 children
14 grandchildren
18 great-grandchildren
2 great-great grandchildren

Address: 57 Scugog Street
Bowmanville ON L1C 3J7

Smilde, Drenthe, May 7, 1947

Chatham, ON, May 7, 2012

65th Wedding Anniversary

God is good, we will celebrate our parents,

CORNELIS (Case) AND REINA FEYEN (nee Mast)

65th Wedding Anniversary together with our families and reflect on how God has blessed them richly with happiness and good health.

Jake and Lynnda Feyen, Norwich, ON Fred and Margaret Feyen, Chatham, ON
Wilma and Will Rypstra, Ilderton, ON Jeannie Feyen, Ilderton, ON
Hetty and Todd Hunter, Chatham, ON Irene Stewart, Chatham, ON
16 Grandchildren and 21 Great-grandchildren.

Home address: 14 Algonquian Dr.
Chatham ON N7M 5Y2

65th Wedding Anniversary!

May 7, 1947-2012

With deep thankfulness, we are happy to announce the
65th Wedding Anniversary of our parents

DERK AND RIE NANNINGA (nee Weessies)

Congratulations Mom and Dad (Oma and Opa).

We give thanks to God for you and pray that we, too, will follow in your footsteps of commitment and love for God and each other. Your devotion to God, love for Jesus and submission to the work of the Spirit in your lives will always be a testimony and beacon of light and wisdom to all of us.

Your wedding text, Proverbs 3:5,6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart...(and)

in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path.

We love you both very much!

Gerda & Dave Repol (3 children/spouses; 6 grandchildren)

John & Karen Nanninga (2 children)

Rick & Elizabeth Nanninga (4 children/spouses; 3 grandchildren)

Send Correspondence to:

D. Nanninga, c/o Kingsway Arms
218 - 65 Clarington Blvd
Bowmanville ON L1C 0A1

Obituary

George Rhebergen

August 13, 1933 – February 1, 2012

After a long illness, George was called into the loving arms of his Saviour. He KNEW that his Redeemer lives and he told that truth to everyone who would listen.

May this knowledge, of a world of love awaiting us after death, be our comfort today while we get used to this physical world without him in it.

Husband, for over 52 years, to Grace Ellen.

Father and grandfather to:

Peter & Beth, Daniel, Julia and Andrew Rhebergen

Wayne Rhebergen

Walt & Ellen, Jake, Deb, Lizz and Rose Vanderwerf

Brother/Brother-in-law to: Anita Rhebergen (2010); Johanna (1985) & Holger Larsen (2006); Berend (1996) & Sina Rhebergen; Gerrie & Bertus (1988) Boschman; Gerald & Frances Rhebergen; Johan Rhebergen (1986) & Mary (Albert) Smit; Diane & Bill (1974) Hesselink; Diny & Sid (2001) Reitsma; Engbert (2009) & Ina (2009) Rhebergen; Henry (2005) & Leny Rhebergen; Elly & Ralph Hoftzyer; Bertus Rhebergen; John & Rita Rhebergen; Tine & Harry Houtman; Peter & Cathy Rhebergen

Brother-in-law to: Mary & Chris Tammel; Cory & Susan Ellen.

Correspondence via email at: grace@eachnewday.com



Obituaries

Maria Johanna Schaly

of Barrie, went home to be with her Lord and Saviour on
Thursday, March 29, 2012.
in her 102nd year.

Beloved wife of the late Walter Schaly.

Dear mother of:

Bert & wife Hennie of New Lowell,
Henk & wife Hennie of Calabogie,
Lynn Grasmeyer & husband Tom of Utopia
Arie & wife Joyce of Orillia,
Tys & wife Eleanor of Thornton,
John & wife Helen of Egbert
Alida Eisses & husband John of Stroud.

Loving grandmother of 33, great-grandmother of 76, great-great-grandmother of seven.

Pre-deceased by brothers Arie and Henk, daughter-in-law Willy and grandson Eric.

The funeral service was held on April 5th. Her favourite psalm was Psalm 139.

She always had her bible open on her knee.

Correspondence: 1698 Innisfil Beach Rd.
Innisfil ON L9S4B8

Aalten, GLD

Bernard Korten

Niagara Falls, Ont.

March 17, 1930

Psalm 23

April 9, 2012

Safe in the Arms of Jesus

Bernard passed away at Hospice Niagara, surrounded by his loving family, on Monday, April 9, 2012 at the age of 82 years.

Beloved husband for 53 years to Susan (Boers) Korten.
Dearly loved father of Joan DeGroot and Andrew Korten.
Loving grandfather of Elena, Kathryn and Nancy DeGroot, James and Bernie Korten and great-grandfather of Violet Korten.
Dear brother of Gerrit Korten (Grada)-Holland, Albert (Nell) Korten-Vineland and Gerald (Nelly) Korten-Dunnville and brother-in-law of Hermien Korten-Fenwick, Klaske Korten-Holland, Margaret (Gre) Korten-Ridgeway, and Margaret VanLierop-St. Catharines and Joe (Gerda) Boers-Toronto.

Predeceased by brothers Johan (& Woutje & Inge), Henry, Willem and John and sister Anna (& John Boers) and brother/sister-in-laws Andrew Boers, Dien Korten and Bas VanLierop.

Correspondence: Susan Korten
2459 Thompson Road
Niagara Falls ON L2E 6S4

Holland Concert Choir

in Holland Christian Homes, Heritage Hall.

May 4, 7.30 p.m.

Soloists: Julia Bronkhorst, Soprano;
Else Marieke den Hartogh, Flute;
Jan Lenselink, piano; Peter Bontje, syntheesizer;
Jan Verhoef, conductor.

Program: The Moabites

Instrumental Intermezzo

Solo Soprano

Colors of Grace

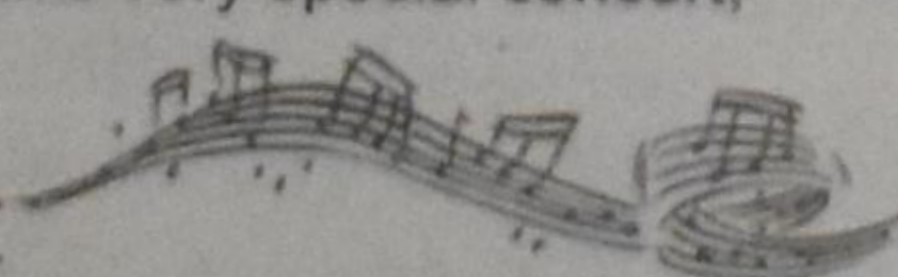
Intermezzo (bring your own cup)

Ave Verum

Solo soprano

Requiem for May 4

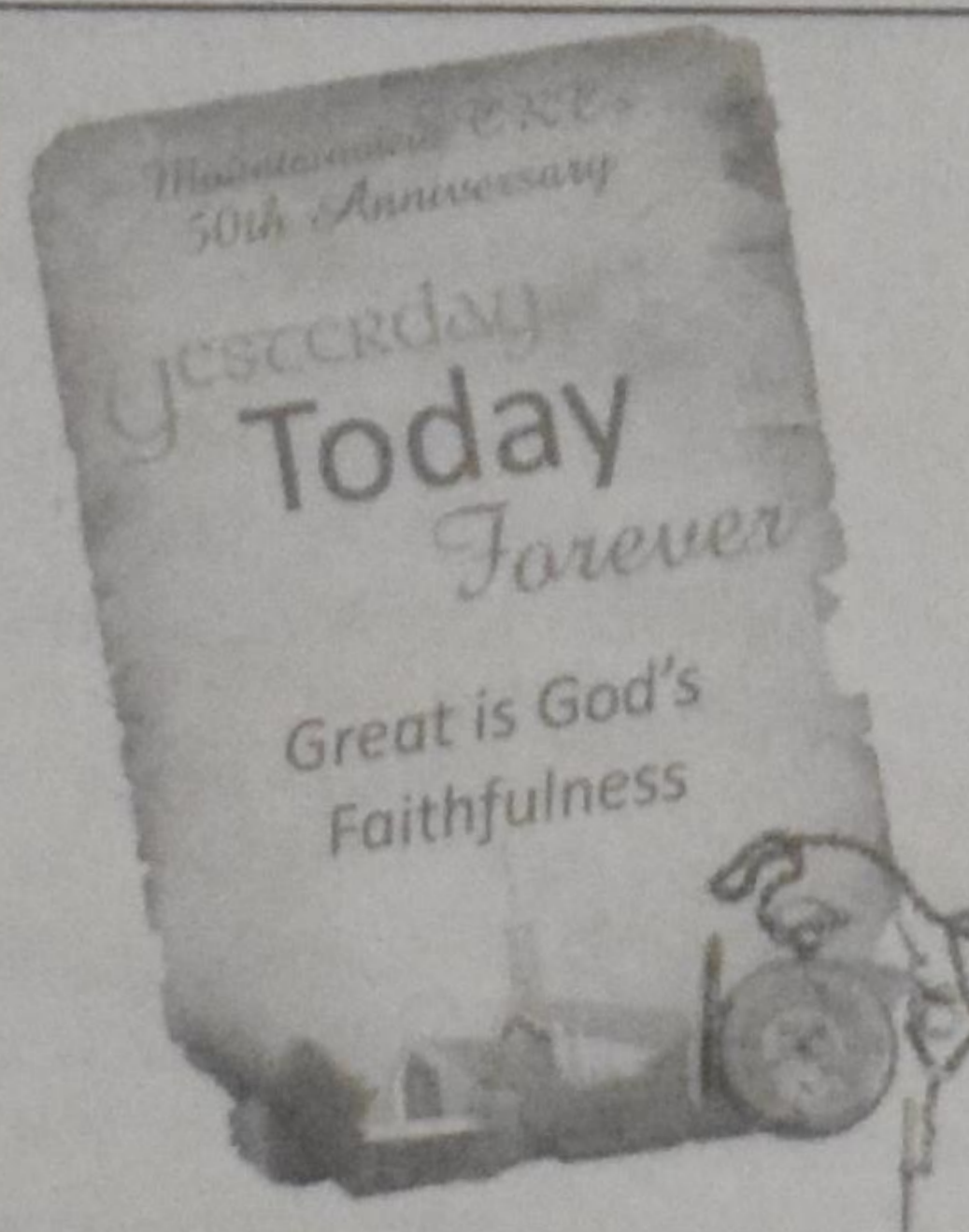
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Classifieds

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Advertising

Job Opportunities

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Springdale CRC is a mid-size church thirty minutes north of Toronto, ON, in a rural area surrounded by rapidly growing communities.

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who follows Christ's leadership to shepherd us into the next phase of our ministry.

We seek a man who has vision, diplomacy, leadership qualities, and above all, the ability to preach God's Word in a way that brings Him glory and builds up the church. We are not looking for a miracle worker, but a man who can and will work with others so that our God can work the miracles. Our new pastor will help us reach into the surrounding communities with love and concern, so that together we may proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Please send your letter of interest or profile in confidence to springdalepst@gmail.com

Covenant CRC, Barrie, ON is seeking a

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who is committed to sound Biblical preaching and has a servant's heart. We are a traditional and conservative church seeking to grow spiritually and to reach out to our community. Prospective ministers should contact the search committee at barcovcrc@gmail.com

Pacific Christian School in beautiful Victoria, BC is searching for a

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Please submit your application, resume and statement of faith to the:

Search Committee

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Email: careers@pacificchristian.ca



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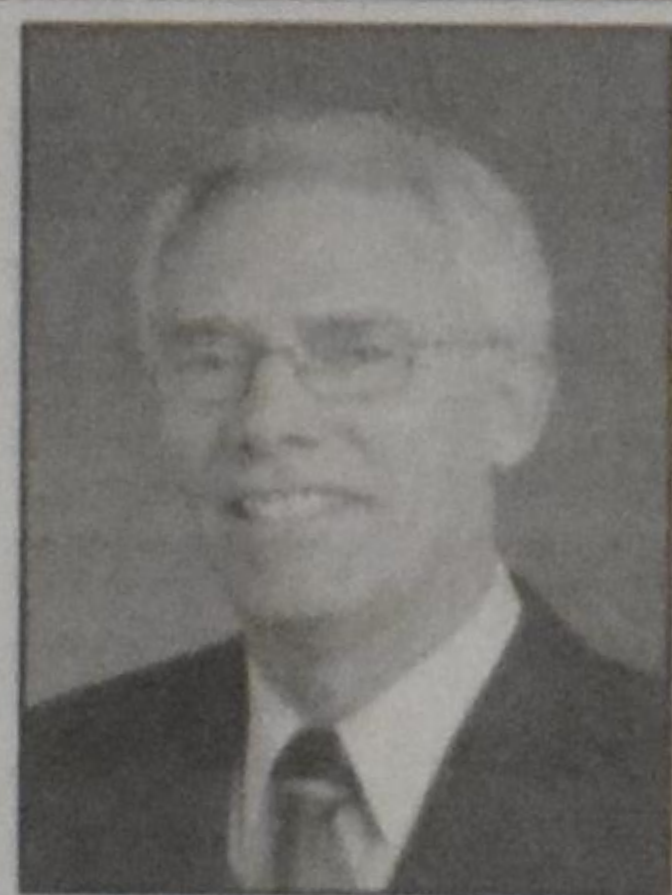
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Apr 20–21 NILDCanada Conference, "Changing Your Mind", at Knox Christian School, **Bowmanville**. A warm welcome to all educators, Homeschoolers and parents to our annual conference. Downloadable brochure at www.nildcanada.org Please join us as together we explore quality learning solutions to help students with ADHD, Dyslexia and other learning challenges.

Apr 20–22 Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend. London, ON Register at reformed-me.org.

Apr 21 Annual Male Choir Festival. 7:30 pm. Mount Hamilton CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont. Tickets \$15. Call 905-689-5266 for more information.

Apr 29 Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Zantingh will be preaching. DVDs are available.

May 1–4 Growing the Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit Guelph Bible Conference Grounds, **Guelph**, ON For information please visit dunamisfellowshipcanada.org For an event brochure, contact dfc@dunamisfellowshipcanada.org or 519-821-3603

May 5–6 Grace Christian Reformed Church, **Welland** ON will celebrate its 50th Anniversary. Join us for a Lasagne Dinner on Saturday and a Worship Celebration on Sunday. Contact nieuwold@becon.org for more information.

May 4 Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m. Free. Featuring Stephanie Burgoyne and William Vandertuin in Organ solos and "Organ four hand" selections.

May 5 Holland Concert Choir directed by Jan Verhoef at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church 290 Main St. E. **Grimsbey** L3M 1P8. at 8 o'clock.

May 4 Holland Concert Choir in Holland Christian Homes. See ad.

May 11 Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m. Free. Featuring Andrew Keegan Mackriell, Director of Music: St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral.

May 18 Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m.

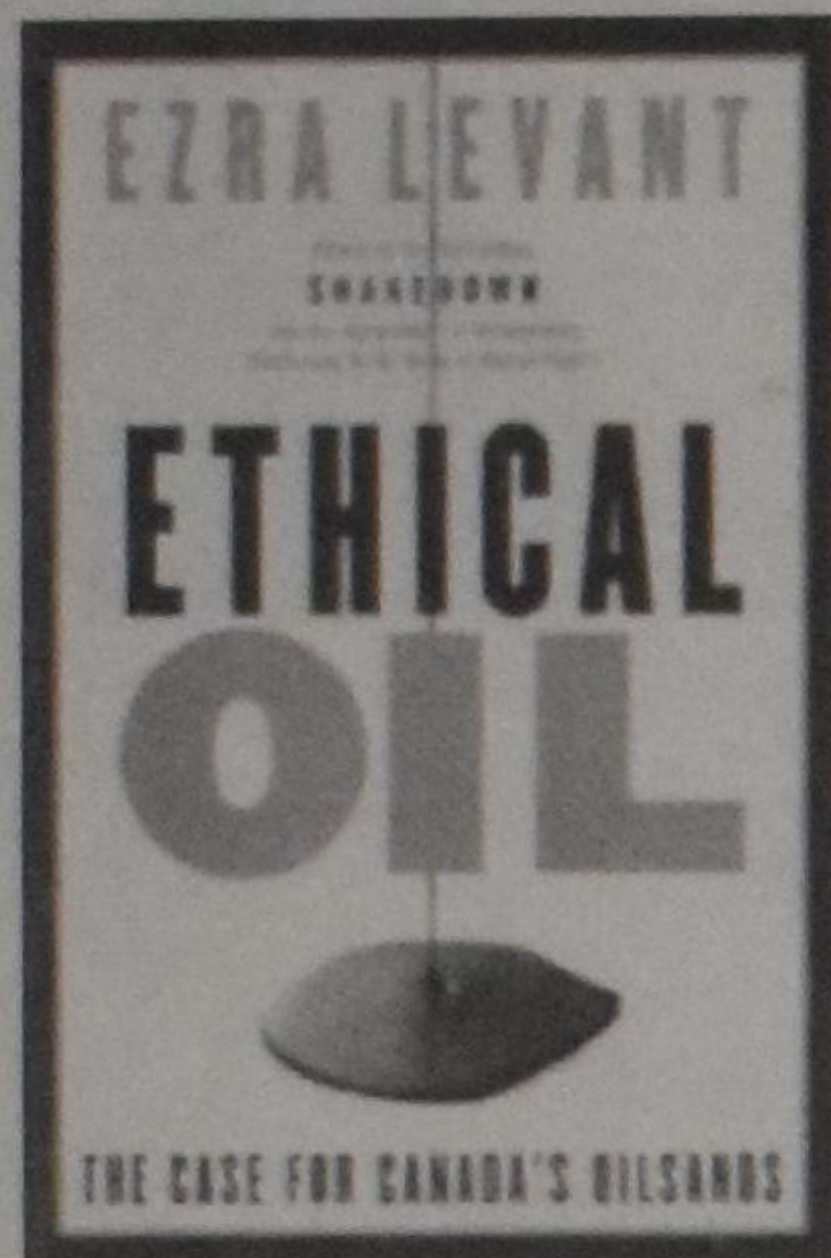
May 25 Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. 12:15 p.m. Free. Featuring Joel Vanderzee, Organist Choirmaster St. John's - Kilmarnock School, Breslau.

June 8–9 Immanuel Christian Schools of **Lethbridge**, Alberta, will celebrate 50 years of God's goodness. For more information, please call the business office at (403) 327-4233 or visit our website at www.immanuelchristian.org

June 13 Hollandse Dag, Moorefield Community Centre. See ad next issue.

News

The shrivelled moral universe of ethical oil



Ezra Levant's *Ethical Oil* suggests that individual freedom is the absolute good.

is between Canada's "ethical oil" or "unethical oil" from tyrannous nations like Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, or Iran.

Is this a healthy development? Should Christians join the ethical oil parade?

Biblically attuned Christians are obviously receptive to ethical arguments. In a rapidly secularizing society, it is heart-warming to hear ethics play a major role in public debate! And there *is* a spark of truth in the ethical oil argument. The moral behaviour of countries should have some influence on whether or not we buy their products.

Our confessional smoke detectors should start buzzing, however, when we notice how narrowly ethics are conceived of in this approach. Ethical oil proponents want to use ethics to sell Canadian oil-sands products, for example, but are silent on the ethics of buying *billions of dollars worth of goods* from China when it obviously oppresses Christians and other religions like *Falun Gong*.

The moral universe of ethical oil is very low grade and crude. A close reading of Ezra Levant's book *Ethical Oil* shows he believes individual freedom is the absolute good. Only a free autonomous individual [literally, a law (*nomos*) to oneself (*auto*)] may create ethics for him/herself. Ethical requirements only limit individual freedom. This may only legitimately occur, Levant assumes as a philosophical liberal, if ethical requirements are created by a majority in a democratic legislature. Then, society, groups, oil and investment companies must obey these ethics. Not because God wants us to act ethically, but because the human majority does. In Levant's moral universe, humans are the real ultimate source of norms and values.

A dramatically different moral universe emerges from the Christian narrative. All of creation is pic-

John Hiemstra

The idea of "ethical oil" entered Canadian politics like a lightning bolt! The oilsands were being branded "dirty oil" by environmental critics at home and abroad, when, out of the blue, Environment Minister Peter Kent took a cue from lobbyist Ezra Levant and reframed the oilsands as "ethical oil." The phrase seems to have caught on. Today, many of us think America's real choice

tured simultaneously as "gift" and "call" directly from God. Thus, creation is charged with God's normativity. Humans are created in God's image, and therefore are response-able, that is, able to receive and answer God's gifts and calls in their lives.

For liberals, this is a very oppressive universe indeed, because laws and norms are automatically seen as external *limits* on human freedom. But Scriptures characterize God's laws or norms as *conditions* for freedom. They point us down the paths of becoming truly human, of flourishing as human community, and of culturing creation to blossom. For Christians, following God's norms serves to liberate and fulfill creation!

Redeeming ethical oil

A Christian ethical framework ought to ask difficult questions that ethical oil ignores. Do we really *need* more oil? Have we developed a way of life based on sprawling suburbs, automobile dependency, globalized economic trade and industrialized agriculture that demands far too much oil? Has our lifestyle become overly materialistic at the expense of genuine wellbeing?

Are we happier now just because we are richer than we were in the 1960s? Will ever-increasing material things and consumption truly make us happy? Is it good that corporations and advertising firms are empowered to create new, artificial needs within us? Is it right that the world's depleting oil, as well as natural resources, are used to satisfy our trivial wants for the latest edition of electronic gadgets, throw-away products, excessively large homes, and oversized cars? Can the world sustain seven billion people (and growing) if we all live a wasteful North American lifestyle?

And there are more profoundly ethical questions. Is it true that human science and technology can guarantee progress and engineer a path to ultimate human happiness? Is it true that continuous economic growth, advocated by almost all political parties, is the only way to generate the tax revenues needed to pay for social and health programs? Or can flourishing social and health conditions be encouraged in other ways? Is it ethical to suggest our choice is between oilsands jobs or no jobs, when our real choice is between creating clean alternative energy jobs or dirty, fossil fuel jobs?

The ethical oil approach is too narrow. It is seriously mistaken to assume these larger ethical questions will limit human freedom. God's norms point us to life! Finally, is it ethical for the ethical oil framework to deliberately avoid these big questions at the very moment that the groaning of God's good creation grows louder and louder around the globe? We owe it to God, our grandchildren and to future generations to debate and faithfully answer these questions. ➤

John Hiemstra teaches Political Studies in the interdisciplinary 4-year program "Politics, History & Economics" at The King's University College in Edmonton. He is a graduate of the Institute for Christian Studies (MA) and the University of Calgary (PhD).



Ads try to convince us that there is 'Ethical oil'.

Odds and Trends

Ikeaville?

Do you sit in a Poäng or eat your dinner on a Bjursta? If so, you're probably a fan of the Swedish furniture company Ikea. Ikea is the world's largest furniture retailer, and at least a few of their ready-to-assemble products can be found in most homes. Not everyone knows, however, that in addition to furnishing homes Ikea also builds them. Customers in Scandinavian countries and the U.K.



can purchase Ikea-made BoKlok flat-pack houses that attempt to offer "more housing for less money." The company's latest venture, then, is perhaps the inevitable next step: an Ikea owned, built and managed urban neighbourhood in London,

England's post-industrial east side. The neighbourhood, which will be called "Strand East," will offer mixed income housing in which residents are effectively tenants of Ikea. In keeping with the company's penchant for neatness and order, these residents will be subject to certain rules and standards of cleanliness and behaviour. Sounds kind of like living in an Ikea store.

New Da Vinci painting

One thing you won't find at Ikea is a previously undiscovered painting by Leonardo Da Vinci. In fact, you aren't very likely to find one of these anywhere since no new paintings by the Renaissance artist have been authenticated for more than 75 years. That is, until now. Maybe. When Peter Silverman, a Canadian art collector, saw a Renaissance-style portrait of a young woman that reminded him of Da Vinci's work in a New York art gallery, he bought it immediately for \$21,850. The painting may now be worth \$100 million. Silverman sent a digital image of the painting to Martin Kemp, a world-renowned Da Vinci scholar. Kemp frequently receives bogus pointers toward undiscovered Leonardo paintings, but something seemed different about Silverman's painting. After a great deal of sleuthing, carbon-dating, and, eventually, a trip to the national library of Poland to examine a very rare book, Kemp came to believe that the portrait is a genuine Da Vinci.

Extreme kitchen chemistry

The science involved in determining the age of a painting is relatively benign, but some scientific procedures are dangerous enough to warrant laws against attempting them yourself. A Swedish man named Richard Handl learned this the hard way after he was arrested for trying to split the atom in his kitchen. After a failed experiment in which he cooked up a mixture of americium, radium, sulphuric acid and beryllium in a saucepan (the next step would have been to fire a neutron ray into neutrons harvested from the concoction), it occurred to Handl that there might be some kind of prohibition on conducting nuclear physics in one's kitchen. Before staging a second attempt, Handl sent off an e-mail to the Swedish Radiation Authority asking if his experiment broke any laws. It wasn't long before the police arrived. Handl is now prohibited from conducting home experiments, both by the state and by his landlord.

As crazy as all this sounds, Handl isn't the first person to attempt this sort of thing. In the early 1990s an American named David Hahn wrote to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission pretending to be a high school physics teacher and requesting information on how to split the atom. With the help of the pamphlet he received Hahn was able to turn his garden shed into a nuclear reactor, at least until he was shut down by a group of police officers who descended on the radiation-filled shed wearing protective suits. All of this, of course, gives new meaning to the phrase "don't try this at home."

Michael Buma